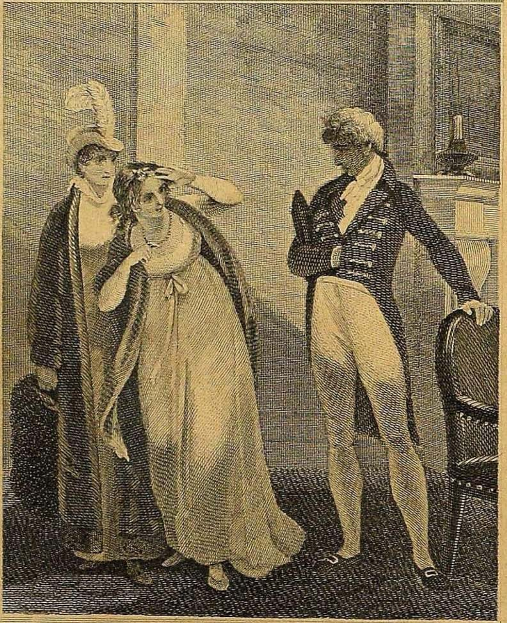
BELLES STRATAGEM



LETITIA __ WELL, HANG IT I'LL TAKE HEART; WHY HE IS BUT A MAN YOU KNOW, COUSIN.

ACT III SCENE I.

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THE

BELLE'S STRATAGEM;

A COMEDY,

IN FIVE ACTS;

BY MRS. COWLEY.

AS PERFORMED AT THE THEATRES ROYAL,

DRURY LANE AND COVENT GARDEN.

PRINTED UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF THE MANAGERS

FROM THE PROMPT BOOK.

WITH REMARKS

BY MRS. INCHBALD.

LONDON:

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REMARKS.

This comedy appeared on the stage in 1780; it was extremely attractive for two seasons, and still holds a place in the catalogue of those plays, which are generally performed every year.

Its greatest charm is, that it is humorous, without ever descending to that source of humour, easy of access, and which is placed among characters in low life.

The persons of importance in this drama are all elegant, or, at least, well bred; and, while they excite mirth, they create also an interest in their behalf, which is assisted to the end of the piece by a variety of forcible and pleasing occurrences.

The incident, from which the play takes its title, is, perhaps, the least pleasing, and the least probable, of any amongst the whole; still, this stratagem, as the foundation of a multiplicity of others, far better conceived and executed, has a claim to the toleration of the reader, and will generally obtain admiration from the auditor, by the skill of the actress who imitates a simpleton.

The dialogue of this play is very good; abound-

ing in excellent satire, with a most perfect description of the modes and manners of the fashionable world.

If Doricourt should remind the reader of Sir Harry Wildair, or Valentine in "Love for Love," it is the only character in the work, that does not appear original—Sir George and Lady Frances Touchwood, are more particularly new than the rest.

The second plot, in which they are the principals, is, to many spectators and readers, much more interesting than the first. It is assuredly more refined and more natural, though neither so bold nor so brilliant.

The love of Sir George and his wife is fervent, yet reasonable; they are fond, but not foolish; and with all their extreme delicacy of opinions, never once express their thoughts, either in ranting, affected, or insipid, sentences.

Lady Frances, being protected at the masquerade, delights some auditors, as much as Doricourt's falling violently in love there; and though neither of these events, traced through all their meanders, may appear strictly within the bounds of likelihood, yet dramatic probability is seldom for a moment lost; which is the happy art of alluring the attention of an audience, from the observation of every defect, and of fixing it solely upon every beauty which the dramatist displays.

To explain this remark—who does not scorn that romantic passion, which is inflamed to the highest ardour, by a few hours conversation with a woman

whose face is concealed? And yet, who does not here sympathize with the lover, and feel a strong agitation, when Letitia, going to take off her mask, exclaims, in a tremulous voice,—" This is the most awful moment of my life?"

" The Belle's Stratagem" certainly classes amongst modern plays; and yet the mention of powder worn by the ladies, their silk gowns, and other long exploded fashions, together with the hero's having in Paris " danced with the Queen of France at a masquerade," gives a certain sensation to the reader, which seems to place the work on the honourable list of ancient dramas.

But the period of the last twenty-six years, which has produced in the world more wonderful changes, in fashions, manners, opinions, and characters, than many a century had done before, has yet preserved one illustrious character, named in this play, free from alteration;—And, at the present moment, her eulogium is heard in the midst of crowded theatres, with all that glow of veneration and love, which heretofore it inspired; and which now, more than ever, becomes due to those virtues—which time has proved to be steadfast.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

	DRURY LANE.	COVENT GARDEN.
DORICOURT	*Mr. Elliston.*	*Mr. Lewis.*
HARDY	*Mr. Dowton.*	*Mr. Munden.*
SIR GEO. TOUCHWOOD	*Mr. H. Siddons.*	*Mr. Murray.*
FLUTTER	*Mr. Palmer.*	*Mr. Fawcett.*
SAVILLE	*Mr. Powell.*	*Mr. C. Kemble.*
VILLERS	*Mr. Bartley.*	*Mr. Claremont.*
COURTALL	*Mr. Holland.*	*Mr. Farley.*
SILVERTONGUE	*Mr. Maddocks.*	*Mr. Simmons.*
TOM FOOL	*Mr. Chatterly.*	
GENTLEMEN		
DICK	*Mr. Purser.*	
GIBSON	*Mr. Evans.*	*Mr. Atkins.*
SERVANT	*Mr. Rhodes.*	
LETITIA HARDY	*Miss Duncan.*	*Miss Smith.*
MRS. RACKETT	*Mrs. Dormer.*	*Mrs. Glover.*
LADY TOUCHWOOD	*Miss Mellon.*	*Miss Brunton.*
MISS OGLE	*Miss Boyce.*	*Miss Waddy.*
KITTY WILLIS	*Mrs. Scott.*	*Miss Cox.*

SCENE—London.

THE

BELLE'S STRATAGEM.

ACT THE FIRST.

SCENE I.

Lincoln's Inn.

Enter SAVILLE, *followed by a* SERVANT, *at the Top of the Stage, looking round, as if at a Loss.*

Sav. Lincoln's Inn!—Well, but where to find him, now I am in Lincoln's Inn?—Where did he say his master was?

Serv. He only said, in Lincoln's Inn, sir.

Sav. That's pretty!—And your wisdom never inquired, at whose chambers?

Serv. Sir, you spoke to the servant yourself.

Sav. If I was too impatient to ask questions, you ought to have taken directions, blockhead!

Enter COURTALL, *singing.*

Ha, Courtall!—Bid him keep the horses in motion, and then inquire at all the chambers round. [*Exit.* SERVANT.] What the devil brings you to this part of

the town?—Have any of the long robes handsome wives, sisters, or chambermaids?

Court. Perhaps they have;—but I came on a different errand; and had thy good fortune brought thee here half an hour sooner, I'd have given thee such a treat! ha! ha! ha!

Sav. I'm sorry I missed it—What was it?

Court. I was informed, a few days since, that my cousins Fallow were come to town, and desired earnestly to see me at their lodgings, in Warwick Court, Holborn. Away drove I, painting them all the way as so many Hebes. They came from the furthest part of Northumberland, had never been in town, and in course, were made up of rusticity, innocence, and beauty.

Sav. Well!

Court. After waiting thirty minutes, during which there was a violent bustle, in bounced five sallow damsels, four of them maypoles;—the fifth, nature, by way of variety, had bent in the Æsop style—But they all opened at once, like hounds on a fresh scent—"Oh, cousin Courtall!—How do you do, cousin Courtall?—Lord, cousin, I am glad you are come! We want you to go with us to the Park, and the plays, and the opera, and Almack's, and all the fine places!"——The devil, thought I, my dears, may attend you, for I am sure I won't.—However, I heroically stayed an hour with them, and discovered the virgins were all come to town, with the hopes of leaving it—wives:—their heads full of knight-baronights, fops, and adventures.

Sav. Well, how did you get off?

Court. Oh, pleaded a million engagements.—However, conscience twitched me, so I breakfasted with them this morning, and afterwards 'squired them to the gardens here, as the most private place in town; and then took a sorrowful leave, complaining of my

hard, hard fortune, that obliged me to set off immediately for Dorsetshire—Ha! ha! ha!

Sav. I congratulate your escape—Courtall at Almack's, with five aukward country cousins!—Ha! ha! ha!—Why, your existence, as a man of gallantry, could never have survived it.

Court. Death and fire! had they come to town, like the rustics of the last age, to see Paul's, the lions, and the waxwork—at their service; but the cousins of our days, come up ladies—and, with the knowledge they glean from magazines and pocket-books, fine ladies;—laugh at the bashfulness of their grandmothers, and boldly demand their *entrées* into the first circles.

Sav. Come, give me some news.

Court. Oh, enough for three gazettes!—The ladies are going to petition for a bill, that, during the war, every man may be allowed two wives.

Sav. 'Tis impossible they should succeed, for the majority of both houses know what it is to have one.

Court. But, pr'ythee, Saville, how came you to town, whilst all the qualified gentry are shooting in the country?

Sav. I came to meet my friend Doricourt, who, you know, is lately arrived from Rome.

Court. Arrived! yes, 'faith, and has cut us all out!—His carriage, his liveries, his dress, himself, are the rage of the day! His first appearance set the whole *ton* in a ferment, and his valet is besieged by *levées* of tailors, habit makers, and other ministers of fashion, to gratify the impatience of their customers, for becoming *à la mode de Doricourt*—Nay, the beautiful Lady Frolic, t'other night, with two sister countesses, insisted upon his waistcoat for muffs; and their snowy arms, now bear it in triumph about town, to the heart-rending affliction of all our *beaux garçons!*

Sav. Indeed! Well, those little gallantries will soon be over—he's on the point of marriage.

Court. Marriage! Doricourt on the point of marriage! 'tis the happiest tidings you could have given, next to his being hanged.—Who is the bride elect?

Sav. I never saw her; but 'tis Miss Hardy, the rich heiress—The match was made by the parents, and the courtship began on their nurse's knees; master used to crow at miss, and miss used to chuckle at master.

Court. Oh, then by this time, they care no more for each other, than I do for my country cousins.

Sav. I don't know that; they have never met since thus high; and so, probably, have some regard for each other.

Court. Never met!—Odd!

Sav. A whim of Mr. Hardy's; he thought his daughter's charms would make a more forcible impression, if her lover remained in ignorance of them, till his return from the Continent.

Enter SAVILLE'S SERVANT.

Serv. Mr. Doricourt, sir, has been at Counsellor Pleadwell's, and gone about five minutes.

[*Exit* SERVANT.

Sav. Five minutes—Zounds! I have been five minutes too late all my lifetime!——Good morrow, Courtall—I must pursue him. [*Going.*

Court. Promise to dine with me to-day;—I have some honest fellows. [*Going off on the opposite Side.*

Sav. Can't promise—perhaps I may.——See there, there's a bevy of female Patagonians, coming down upon us.

Court. By the lord, then, it must be my strapping cousins—I dare not look behind me—Run, man, run!

[*Exit on the same Side.*

SCENE II.

A Hall at DORICOURT'S.

Enter PORTER, *several foreign* SERVANTS, *and Two* TRADESMEN.

The PORTER *takes one of them Aside.*

Tradesm. Well then, you have show'd us all?

French. All, *en vérité, Messieurs!* you *avez* seen every ting.—*Serviteur—serviteur*— [*Exeunt* TRADESMEN.] Ah, here comes one *autre* curious Englishman, and dat's one *autre* guinea *pour moi.*

Enter SAVILLE.

Allons, Monsieur, dis way; I will show you tings, such tings you never see, begar, in England!—Velvets by Le Mosse—suits cut by Verdue—trimmings by Grossette—embroidery by Detanville——

Sav. Puppy! where is your master?

Port. Zounds! you chattering frog-eating dunderhead, can't you see a Gentleman?—'Tis Mr. Saville.

French. Monsieur Saville! *Je suis mort de peur.*—Ten tousand pardons! *Excusez mon erreur,* and permit me you conduct to Monsieur Doricourt; he be too happy *à vous voir.* [*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.

An Apartment at DORICOURT'S.

Enter DORICOURT.

Doric. [*Speaking to a* SERVANT *behind.*] I shall be too late for St. James's; bid him come immediately.

Enter FRENCHMAN *and* SAVILLE.

French. Monsieur Saville. [*Exit* FRENCHMAN.

Doric. Most fortunate!—My dear Saville, let the warmth of this embrace speak the pleasure of my heart.

Sav. Well, this is some comfort, after the scurvy reception I met with in your hall.—I prepared my mind, as I came up stairs, for a *bon jour*, a grimace, and an *adieu*.

Doric. Why so?

Sav. Judging of the master, from the rest of the family.—What the devil is the meaning of that flock of foreigners below, with their parchment faces, and snuffy whiskers?—What! can't an Englishman stand behind your carriage, buckle your shoe, or brush your coat?

Doric. Stale, my dear Saville, stale—Englishmen make the best soldiers, citizens, artizans, and philosophers, in the world; but the very worst footmen.

Sav. I may as well give it up—You had always the art of placing your faults in the best light; and I can't help loving you, faults and all: so to start a subject which must please you—When do you expect Miss Hardy?

Doric. Oh, the hour of expectation is past—She is arrived, and I this morning had the honour of an interview at Pleadwell's. The writings were ready: and, in obedience to the will of Mr. Hardy, we met to sign and seal.

Sav. Has the event answered? Did your heart leap or sink, when you beheld your mistress?

Doric. 'Faith, neither one nor t'other:—she's a fine girl, as far as mere flesh and blood goes.—But——

Sav. But what?

Doric. Why, she's *only* a fine girl;—complexion, shape, and features,—nothing more.

Sav. Is not that enough?

Doric. No—she should have spirit; fire! *l'air enjoué!* that something, that nothing, which every body feels, and which nobody can describe, in the resistless charmers of Italy and France.

Sav. Thanks to the parsimony of my father, that kept me from travel! I would not have lost my relish for true unaffected English beauty, to have been quarrelled for by all the belles of Versailles and Florence.

Doric. Pho! thou hast no taste!—English beauty! 'tis insipidity: it wants the zest, it wants poignancy, Frank! Why, I have known a Frenchwoman, indebted to nature for no one thing, but a pair of decent eyes, reckon in her suite, as many counts, marquises, and *petits maitres*, as would satisfy three dozen of our first-rate toasts. I have known an Italian *Marquizina* make ten conquests in stepping from her carriage; and carry her slaves from one city to another, whose real intrinsic beauty would have yielded to half the little *grisettes* that pace your Mall on a Sunday.

Sav. And has Miss Hardy nothing of this?

Doric. If she has, she was pleased to keep it to herself. I was in the room half an hour, before I could catch the colour of her eyes; and every attempt to draw her into conversation, occasioned so cruel an

embarrassment, that I was reduced to the necessity of news, French fleets, and Spanish captures, with her father.

Sav. So, Miss Hardy, with only beauty, modesty, and merit, is doomed to the arms of a husband who will despise her.

Doric. You are unjust—Though she has not inspired me with violent passion, my honour secures her felicity.

Sav. Come, come, Doricourt, you know very well, that when the honour of a husband is *locum-tenens* for his heart, his wife must be as indifferent as himself, if she is not unhappy.

Doric. Pho! never moralise without spectacles.—But, as we are upon the tender subject, how did you bear Touchwood's carrying Lady Frances?

Sav. You know I never looked up to her with hope; and Sir George is every way worthy of her.

Doric. *A la mode Angloise*, a philosopher, even in love.

Sav. Come, I detain you—you seemed dressed at all points, and of course have an engagement.

Doric. To St. James's.—I dine at Hardy's, and accompany them to the masquerade in the evening—but breakfast with me to-morrow, and we'll talk of our old companions—for I swear to you, Saville, the air of the Continent has not effaced one youthful prejudice or attachment.

Sav. With an exception to the case of ladies and servants.

Doric. True; there I plead guilty:—but I have never yet found any man, whom I could cordially take to my heart, and call friend, who was not born beneath a British sky, and whose heart and manners were not truly English.

[*Exeunt* DORICOURT *and* SAVILLE.

SCENE IV.

An Apartment at MR. HARDY'S.

VILLERS *seated on a Sofa, reading.*

Enter FLUTTER.

Flut. Ha, Villers, have you seen Mrs. Rackett?—Miss Hardy, I find, is out.

Vill. I have not seen her yet. I have made a voyage to Lapland since I came. [*Flinging away the Book.*] A lady at her toilette is as difficult to be moved, as a Quaker. [*Yawning.*] What events have happened in the world since yesterday? have you heard?

Flut. Oh, yes; I stopped at Tattersall's, as I came by, and there I found Lord James Jessamy, Sir William Wilding, and Mr.———. But, now I think on't, you shan't know a syllable of the matter; for I have been informed you never believe above one half of what I say.

Vill. My dear fellow, somebody has imposed upon you most egregiously! Half! Why, I never believe one tenth part of what you say: that is according to the plain and literal expression; but, as I understand you, your intelligence is amusing.

Flut. That's very hard now, very hard. I never related a falsity in my life, unless I stumbled at it by mistake; and if it were otherwise, your dull matter-of-fact people are infinitely obliged to those warm imaginations, which soar into fiction to amuse you; for, positively, the common events of this little dirty world are not worth talking about, unless you embellish them!——Ha! here comes Mrs. Rackett: Adieu to weeds, I see! All life!

Enter MRS. RACKETT.

Enter, madam, in all your charms! Villers has been abusing your toilette, for keeping you so long; but I think we are much obliged to it, and so are you.

Mrs. R. How so, pray? Good-morning t'ye both. Here, here's a hand a-piece for you.

[*They kiss her Hands.*

Flut. How so! Because it has given you so many beauties.

Mrs. R. Delightful compliment! What do you think of that, Villiers?

Vill. That he and his compliments are alike—showy, but won't bear examining.——So you brought Miss Hardy to town last night?

Mrs. R. Yes, I should have brought her before, but I had a fall from my horse, that confined me a week.—I suppose in her heart she wished me hanged a dozen times an hour.

Flut. Why?

Mrs. R. Had she not an expecting lover in town all the time? She meets him this morning at the lawyer's.—I hope she'll charm him; she's the sweetest girl in the world.

Vill. Vanity, like murder, will out.—You have convinced me you think yourself more charming.

Mrs. R. How can that be?

Vill. No woman ever praises another, unless she thinks herself superior in the very perfections she allows.

Flut. Nor no man ever rails at the sex, unless he is conscious he deserves their hatred.

Mrs. R. Thank ye, Flutter—I'll owe ye a *bouruet* for that. I am going to visit the new-married Lady Frances Touchwood.—Who knows her husband?

Flut. Every body.

Mrs. R. Is there not something odd in his character?

Vill. Nothing, but that he is passionately fond of his wife;—and so petulant is his love, that he opened the cage of a favourite bullfinch, and sent it to catch butterflies, because she rewarded its song with her kisses.

Mrs. R. Intolerable monster! Such a brute deserves——

Vill. Nay, nay, nay, nay, this is your sex now.—— Give a woman but one stroke of character, off she goes, like a ball from a racket; sees the whole man, marks him down for an angel or a devil, and so exhibits him to her acquaintance.—This monster! this brute! is one of the worthiest fellows upon earth; sound sense, and a liberal mind; but dotes on his wife to such excess, that he quarrels with every thing she admires, and is jealous of her tippet and nosegay.

Mrs. R. Oh, less love for me, kind Cupid! I can see no difference between the torment of such an affection, and hatred.

Flut. Oh, pardon me, inconceivable difference, inconceivable; I see it as clearly as your bracelet. In the one case the husband would say, as Mr. Snapper said 'tother day, Zounds! madam, do you suppose that *my* table, and *my* house, and *my* pictures!— *Apropos, des Bottes:*—There was the divinest Plague of Athens sold yesterday at Langford's! the dead figures so natural, you would have sworn they had been alive. Lord Primrose bid five hundred—Six, said Lady Carmine—A thousand, said Ingot the Nabob.—Down went the hammer.—A *rouleau* for your bargain, said Sir Jeremy Jingle. And what answer do you think Ingot made him?

Mrs. R. Why took the offer.

Flut. Sir, I would oblige you, but I buy this picture to place in the nursery: the children have already got Whittington and his Cat; 'tis just this size, and they'll make good companions.

Mrs. R. Ha! ha! ha! Well, I protest that's just the way now—the Nabobs and their wives outbid one at every sale, and the creatures have no more taste—

Vill. There again! You forget this story is told by Flutter, who always remembers every thing but the circumstances and the person he talks about;—'twas Ingot who offered a *rouleau* for the bargain, and Sir Jeremy Jingle who made the reply.

Flut. Egad, I believe you are right——Well, the story is as good one way as t'other, you know. Good morning. I am going to Mrs. Crotchet's concert, and in my way back shall make my bow at Sir George's. [*Going.*

Vill. I'll venture every figure in your tailor's bill, you make some blunder there.

Flut. [*Turning back.*] Done! my tailor's bill has not been paid these two years; and I'll open my mouth with as much care as Mrs. Bridget Button, who wears cork plumpers in each cheek, and never hazards more than six words, for fear of showing them.

[*Exit* FLUTTER.

Mrs. R. 'Tis a goodnatured insignificant creature! let in every where, and cared for no where.—There's Miss Hardy returned from Lincoln's Inn:—she seems rather chagrined.

Vill. Then I leave you to your communications.

Enter LETITIA, *followed by her* MAID.

Adieu! I am rejoiced to see you so well, madam! but I must tear myself away.

Letit. Don't vanish in a moment.

Vill. Oh, inhuman! you are two of the most dangerous women in town.—Staying here to be cannonaded by four such eyes, is equal to a *rencontre* with Paul Jones, or a midnight march to Omoa!—They'll swallow the nonsense, for the sake of the compliment.

[*Aside.—Exit* VILLERS.

Letit. [*Gives her Cloak to her* MAID.] Order Du

Quesne never more to come again; he shall positively dress my hair no more. [*Exit* MAID.] And this odious silk, how unbecoming it is!—I was bewitched to chuse it. [*Throwing herself on a Chair, and looking in a Pocket Glass,* MRS. RACKETT *staring at her.*] Did you ever see such a fright as I am to-day.

Mrs. R. Yes, I have seen you look much worse.

Letit. How can you be so provoking? If I do not look this morning worse than ever I looked in my life, I am naturally a fright. You shall have it which way you will.

Mrs. R. Just as you please; but pray what is the meaning of all this?

Letit. [*Rising.*] Men are all dissemblers, flatterers, deceivers! Have I not heard a thousand times of my air, my eyes, my shape—all made for victory! and to-day, when I bent my whole heart on one poor conquest, I have proved that all those imputed charms amount to nothing;—for Doricourt saw them unmoved.—A husband of fifteen months could not have examined me with more cutting indifference.

Mrs. R. Then you return it like a wife of fifteen months, and be as indifferent as he.

Letit. Ay, there's the sting! The blooming boy, who left his image in my young heart, is at four and twenty improved in every grace that fixed him there. It is the same face that my memory, and my dreams, constantly painted to me; but its graces are finished, and every beauty heightened. How mortifying, to feel myself at the same moment his slave, and an object of perfect indifference to him!

Mrs. R. How are you certain that was the case? Did you expect him to kneel down before the lawyer, his clerks, and your father, to make oath of your beauty?

Letit. No; but he should have looked as if a sudden ray had pierced him! he should have been breathless! speechless! for, oh! Caroline, all this was I!

Mrs. R. I am sorry you was such a fool. Can you expect a man, who has courted and been courted by half the fine women in Europe, to feel like a girl from a boarding-school? He is the prettiest fellow you have seen, and in course bewilders your imagination; but he has seen a million of pretty women, child, before he saw you; and his first feelings have been over long ago.

Letit. Your raillery distresses me; but I will touch his heart, or never be his wife.

Mrs. R. Absurd, and romantic! If you have no reason to believe his heart pre-engaged, be satisfied; if he is a man of honour, you'll have nothing to complain of.

Letit. Nothing to complain of! Heavens! shall I marry the man I adore, with such an expectation as that.

Mrs. R. And when you have fretted yourself pale, my dear, you'll have mended your expectation greatly.

Letit. [*Pausing.*] Yet I have one hope. If there is any power whose peculiar care is faithful love, that power I invoke to aid me.

Enter MR. HARDY.

Hardy. Well, now; wasn't I right? Aye, Letty! Aye, Cousin Rackett! wasn't I right? I knew 'twould be so. He was all agog to see her before he went abroad; and, if he had, he'd have thought no more of her face, may be, than his own.

Mrs. R. May be not half so much.

Hardy. Ay, may be so,—but I see into things; exactly as I foresaw, to-day he fell desperately in love with the wench, he! he! he!

Letit. Indeed, sir! how did you perceive it?

Hardy. That's a pretty question! How do I perceive every thing? How did I foresee the fall of corn, and the rise of taxes? How did I know, that if we quarrelled with America, Norway deals would be

dearer? How did I foretel that a war would sink the funds? How did I forewarn Parson Homily, that if he didn't some way or other contrive to get more votes than Rubric, he'd lose the lectureship? How did I ——But what the devil makes you so dull, Letitia? I thought to have found you popping about, as brisk as the jacks of your harpischord.

Letit. Surely, sir, it was a very serious occasion.

Hardy. Pho, pho! girls should never be grave before marriage. How did you feel, cousin, beforehand? Ay.

Mrs. R. Feel! why exceeding full of cares.

Hardy. Did you?

Mrs. R. I could not sleep, for thinking of my coach, my liveries, and my chairmen; the taste of clothes I should be presented in, distracted me for a week; and whether I should be married in white or lilac, gave me the most cruel anxiety.

Letit. And is it possible that you felt no other care?

Hardy. And pray, of what sort may your cares be, Mrs. Letitia? I begin to foresee now that you have taken a dislike to Doricourt.

Letit. Indeed, sir, I have not.

Hardy. Then what's all this melancholy about? An't you a going to be married? and what's more, to a sensible man? and, what's more to a young girl, to a handsome man? And what's all this melancholy for, I say?

Mrs. R. Why, because he is handsome and sensible, and because she's over head and ears in love with him; all which, it seems, your foreknowledge had not told you a word of.

Letit. Fie, Caroline!

Hardy. Well, come, do you tell me what's the matter then? If you don't like him, hang the signing and sealing, he shan't have ye:—and yet I can't say that neither; for you know that estate, that cost his father

and me upwards of fourscore thousand pounds, must go all to him if you won't have him: if he won't have you, indeed, 'twill be all yours. All that's clear, engrossed upon parchment, and the poor dear man set his hand to it whilst he was dying.—"Ah!" said I, I foresee you'll never live to see them come together; but their first son shall be christened Jeremiah, after you, that I promise you."——But come, I say, what is the matter? Don't you like him?

Letit. I fear, sir—if I must speak—I fear I was less agreeable in Mr. Doricourt's eyes, than he appeared in mine.

Hardy. There you are mistaken; for I asked him, and he told me he liked you vastly. Don't you think he must have taken a fancy to her?

Mrs. R. Why really I think so, as I was not by.

Letit. My dear sir, I am convinced he has not; but if there is spirit or invention in woman, he shall.

Hardy. Right, girl; go to your toilette——

Letit. It is not my toilette that can serve me: but a plan has struck me, if you will not oppose it, which flatters me with brilliant success.

Hardy. Oppose it! Not I indeed! What is it?

Letit. Why, sir—it may seem a little paradoxical; but, as he does not like me enough, I want him to like me still less, and will at our next interview endeavour to heighten his indifference into dislike.

Hardy. Who the devil could have foreseen that?

Mrs. R. Heaven and earth! Letitia, are you serious?

Letit. As serious as the most important business of my life demands.

Mrs. R. Why endeavour to make him dislike you?

Letit. Because 'tis much easier to convert a sentiment into its opposite, than to transform indifference into tender passion.

Mrs. R. That may be good philosophy, but I am afraid you'll find it a bad maxim.

Letit. I have the strongest confidence in it. I am inspired with unusual spirits, and on this hazard willingly stake my chance for happiness. I am impatient to begin my measures. [*Exit* LETITIA.

Hardy. Can you foresee the end of this, cousin?

Mrs. R. No, sir; nothing less than your penetration can do that, I am sure; and I can't stay now, to consider it. I am going to call on the Ogles, and then to Lady Frances Touchwood's, and then to an auction, and then—I don't know where—but I shall be at home time enough to witness this extraordinary interview. Good-b'ye. [*Exit* MRS. RACKETT.

Hardy. Well, 'tis an odd thing—I can't understand it—but I foresee Letty will have her way, and so I shan't give myself the trouble to dispute it.

[*Exit* HARDY.

ACT THE SECOND.

SCENE I.

SIR GEORGE TOUCHWOOD'S.

Enter DORICOURT *and* SIR GEORGE.

Doric. Married, ha! ha! ha! you, whom I heard in Paris say such things of the sex, are in London a married man.

Sir G. The sex is still what it has ever been since *la petite morale* banished substantial virtues; and ra-

ther than have given my name to one of your high-bred fashionable dames, I'd have crossed the line in a fireship, and married a Japanese.

Doric. Yet you have married an English beauty; yea, and a beauty born in high life.

Sir G. True; but she has a simplicity of heart and manners, that would have become the fair Hebrew damsels toasted by the Patriarchs.

Doric. Ha! ha! Why, thou art a downright matrimonial Quixote. My life on't she becomes as mere a town lady in six months, as though she had been bred to the trade.

Sir G. Common—common—[*Contemptuously.*] No, sir, Lady Frances despises high life so much from the ideas I have given her, that she'll live in it like a salamander in fire.

Doric. I'll send thee off to St. Evreux this night, drawn at full length, and coloured after nature.

Sir G. Tell him, then, to add to the ridicule, that Touchwood glories in the name of husband; that he has found in one Englishwoman more beauty than Frenchmen ever saw, and more goodness than Frenchwomen can conceive.

Doric. Well—enough of description. Introduce me to this phœnix; I came on purpose.

Sir G. Introduce!—oh, ay, to be sure!—I believe Lady Frances is engaged just now—but another time. —How handsome the dog looks to-day! [*Aside.*

Doric. Another time!—but I have no other time.—'Sdeath! this is the only hour I can command this fortnight.

Sir G. [*Aside.*] I am glad to hear it, with all my soul!—So then, you can't dine with us to-day? That's very unlucky.

Doric. Oh, yes—as to dinner—yes, I can I believe, contrive to dine with you to-day.

Sir G. Pshaw! I didn't think on what I was saying; I meant supper.—You can't sup with us?

Doric. Why, supper will be rather more convenient than dinner.—But you are fortunate—if you had asked me any other night, I could not have come.

Sir G. To-night!—Gad, now I recollect, we are particularly engaged to-night.——But to-morrow night——

Doric. Wy, lookye, Sir George, 'tis very plain you have no inclination to let me see your wife at all; so here I sit. [*Throws himself on a Sofa.*]—There's my hat, and here are my legs—Now I sha'n't stir till I have seen her; and I have no engagements: I'll breakfast, dine, and sup with you, every day this week.

Sir G. Was there ever such a provoking wretch!—But, to be plain with you, Doricourt, I and my house are at your service: but you are a damned agreeable fellow; and the woman, I observe, always simper when you appear. For these reasons, I had rather, when Lady Frances and I are together, that you should forget that we are acquainted, further than a nod, a smile, or a how d'ye?

Doric. Very well.

Sir G. It is not merely yourself, *in propria persona*, that I object to; but, if you are intimate here, you'll make my house still more the fashion than it is; and it is already so much so, that my doors are of no use to me. I married Lady Frances, to engross her to myself; yet such is the blessed freedom of modern manners, that, in spite of me, her eyes, thoughts, and conversation, are continually divided amongst all the flirts and coxcombs of fashion.

Doric. To be sure, I confess that kind of freedom is carried rather too far. 'Tis hard one can't have a jewel in one's cabinet, but the whole town must be gratified with its lustre.——He sha'n't preach me out of seeing his wife, though. [*Aside.*

Sir G. Well, now, that's reasonable. When you take time to reflect, Doricourt, I always observe you decide right; and therefore I hope—

Enter a SERVANT.

Serv. Sir, my lady desires——

Sir G. I am particularly engaged.

Doric. Oh, lord, that shall be no excuse in the world. [*Leaping from the Sofa.*] Lead the way, John. —I'll attend your lady.

[*Exit, following the* SERVANT.

Sir G. What devil possessed me to talk about her! ——Here, Doricourt! [*Running after him.*] Doricourt!

Enter MRS. RACKETT *and* MISS OGLE, *followed by a* SERVANT.

Mrs. R. Acquaint your lady, that Mrs. Rackett and Miss Ogle are here. [*Exit* SERVANT.

Miss O. I shall hardly know Lady Frances, 'tis so long since I was in Shropshire.

Mrs. R. And I'll be sworn, you never saw her out of Shropshire.—Her father kept her locked up with his caterpillars and shells; and loved her beyond any thing—but a blue butterfly, and a petrified frog!

Miss O. Ha! ha! ha!—Well, 'twas a cheap way of breeding her:—you know, he was very poor, though a lord; and very high spirited, though a virtuoso.—In town, her Pantheons, operas, and robes de cour, would have swallowed his sea weeds, moths, and monsters, in six weeks!——Sir George, I find, thinks his wife a most extraordinary creature: he has taught her to despise every thing like fashionable life, and boasts that example will have no effect on her.

Mrs. R. There's a great degree of impertinence in all that.—I'll try to make her a fine lady, to humble him.

Miss O. That's just the thing I wish.

Enter LADY FRANCES.

Lady F. I beg ten thousand pardons, my dear Mrs. Rackett.—Miss Ogle, I rejoice to see you: I should have come to you sooner, but I was detained in conversation by Mr. Doricourt.

Mrs. R. Pray, make no apology; I am quite happy that we have your ladyship in town at last.—What stay do you make?

Lady F. A short one! Sir George talks with regret of the scenes we have left; and, as the ceremony of presentation is over, will, I believe, soon return.

Miss O. Sure, he can't be so cruel: Does your ladyship wish to return so soon?

Lady F. I have not the habit of consulting my own wishes; but, I think, if they decide, we shall not return immediately. I have yet hardly formed an idea of London.

Mrs. R. I shall quarrel with your lord and master, if he dares think of depriving us of you so soon. How do you dispose of yourself to-day?

Lady F. Sir George is going with me this morning to the mercer's, to chuse a silk; and then——

Mrs. R. Chuse a silk for you!—Ha! ha! ha! Sir George chuses your laces too, I hope; your gloves, and your pincushions!

Lady F. Madam!

Mrs. R. I am glad to see you blush, my dear Lady Frances. These are strange homespun ways! If you do these things, pray keep them secret. Lord bless us! If the town should know your husband chuses your gowns!

Miss O. You are very young, my lady, and have been brought up in solitude. The maxims you learnt among wood nymphs, in Shropshire, won't pass current here, I assure you.

Mrs. R. Why, my dear creature, you look quite frightened—Come, you shall go with us to an exhibi-

tion and an auction.—Afterwards, we'll take a turn in the Park, and then drive to Kensington; so we shall be at home by four, to dress; and, in the evening, I'll attend you to Lady Brilliant's masquerade.

Lady F. I shall be very happy to be of your party, if Sir George has no engagements.

Mrs. R. What! Do you stand so low in your own opinion, that you dare not trust yourself without Sir George? If you chuse to play Darby and Joan, my dear, you should have stayed in the country;—'tis an exhibition not calculated for London, I assure you.

Miss O. What, I suppose, my lady, you and Sir George will be seen pacing it comfortably round the Canal, arm and arm, and then go lovingly into the same carriage; dine *tête-à-tête*, spend the evening at picquet, and so go soberly to bed at eleven!—Such a snug plan may do for an attorney and his wife; but, for Lady Frances Touchwood, 'tis as unsuitable as linsey-woolsey, or a black bonnet at the Festino!

Lady F. These are rather new doctrines to me!—But, my dear Mrs. Rackett, you and Miss Ogle must judge of these things better than I can. As you observe, I am but young, and may have caught absurd opinions.—Here is Sir George!

Enter SIR GEORGE.

Sir G. [*Aside.*] 'Sdeath, another room full!

Lady F. My love! Mrs. Rackett and Miss Ogle.

Mrs. R. 'Give you joy, Sir George.—We came to rob you of Lady Frances for a few hours.

Sir G. A few hours!

Lady F. Oh, yes! I am going to an exhibition, and an auction, and the Park, and Kensington, and a thousand places!—It is quite ridiculous, I find, for married people to be always together.—We shall be laughed at!

Sir G. I am astonished!—Mrs. Rackett, what does the dear creature mean?

Mrs. R. Mean, Sir George!—What she says, I imagine.

Miss O. Why, you know, sir, as Lady Frances had the misfortune to be bred entirely in the country, she cannot be supposed to be versed in fashionable life.

Sir G. No; Heaven forbid she should!—If she had, madam, she would never have been my wife!

Mrs. R. Are you serious?

Sir G. Perfectly so.—I should never have had the courage to have married a well-bred fine lady.

Miss O. Pray, sir, what do you take a fine lady to be, that you express such fear of her? [*Sneeringly.*

Sir G. A being easily described, madam, as she is seen every where, but in her own house. She sleeps at home, but she lives all over the town. In her mind every sentiment gives place to the lust of conquest, and the vanity of being particular. The feelings of wife and mother, are lost in the whirl of dissipation. If she continues virtuous, 'tis by chance—and, if she preserves her husband from ruin, 'tis by her dexterity at the card table!—Such a woman I take to be a perfect fine lady!

Mrs. R. And you I take to be a slanderous cynic of two and thirty.—Twenty years hence, one might have forgiven such a libel!—Now, sir, hear my definition of a fine lady:—She is a creature for whom nature has done much, and education more; she has taste, elegance, spirit, understanding. In her manner she is free, in her morals nice. Her behaviour is undistinguishingly polite to her husband, and all mankind;—her sentiments are for their hours of retirement. In a word, a fine lady is the life of conversation, the spirit of society, the joy of the public!—Pleasure follows wherever she appears, and the kindest wishes attend her slumbers.—Make haste, then, my dear Lady Frances, commence fine lady, and force your husband to acknowledge the justness of my picture.

Lady F. I am sure 'tis a delightful one. How can you dislike it, Sir George? You painted fashionable life in colours so disgusting, that I thought I hated it; but, on a nearer view, it seems charming. I have hitherto lived in obscurity; 'tis time that I should be a woman of the world. I long to begin;—my heart pants with expectation and delight!

Mrs. R. Come, then; let us begin directly. I am impatient to introduce you to that society, which you were born to ornament and charm.

Lady F. Adieu, my love!—We shall meet again at dinner. [*Going.*

Sir G. Sure, I am in a dream——Fanny!

Lady F. [*Returning.*] Sir George?

Sir G. Will you go without me?

Mrs. R. Will you go without me!—Ha! ha! ha! what a pathetic address! Why, sure, you would not always be seen, side by side, like two beans upon a stalk. Are you afraid to trust Lady Frances with me, sir?

Sir G. Heaven and earth! with whom can a man trust his wife, in the present state of society? Formerly there were distinctions of character amongst ye: every class of females had its particular description; grandmothers were pious, aunts discreet, old maids censorious! but now, aunts, grandmothers, girls, and maiden gentlewomen, are all the same creature;—a wrinkle more or less is the sole difference between ye.

Mrs. R. That maiden gentlewomen have lost their censoriousness, is surely not in your catalogue of grievances.

Sir G. Indeed it is—and ranked amongst the most serious grievances.—Things went well, madam, when the tongues of three or four old virgins kept all the wives and daughters of a parish in awe. They were the dragons, that guarded the Hesperian fruit; and I wonder they have not been obliged, by act of parliament, to resume their function.

Mrs. R. Ha! ha! ha! and pensioned, I suppose, for making strict inquiries into the lives and conversations of their neighbours.

Sir G. With all my heart, and empowered to oblige every woman to conform her conduct to her real situation. You, for instance, are a widow; your air should be sedate, your dress grave, your deportment matronly, and in all things an example to the young women growing up about you!—Instead of which, you are dressed for conquest, think of nothing but ensnaring hearts; are a coquette, a wit, and a fine lady.

Mrs. R. Bear witness to what he says! A coquette, a wit, and a fine lady! Who would have expected an eulogy from such an illnatured mortal!—Valour to a soldier, wisdom to a judge, or glory to a prince, is not more than such a character to a woman.

Miss O. Sir George, I see, languishes for the charming society of a century and a half ago; when a grave 'squire, and a still graver dame, surrounded by a sober family, formed a stiff group, in a mouldy old house, in the corner of a park.

Mrs. R. Delightful serenity! Undisturbed by any noise but the cawing of rooks, and the quarterly rumbling of an old family coach on a state visit; with the happy intervention of a friendly call from the parish apothecary, or the curate's wife.

Sir G. And what is the society of which you boast?—a mere chaos, in which all distinction of rank is lost in a ridiculous affectation of ease, and every different order of beings huddled together, as they were before the creation. In the same select party, you will often find the wife of a bishop and a sharper, of an earl and a fidler. In short, 'tis one universal masquerade, all disguised in the same habits and manners.

Enter a SERVANT.

Serv. Mr. Flutter. [*Exit* SERVANT.

Sir G. Here comes an illustration. Now, I defy you to tell, from his appearance, whether Flutter is a privy counsellor or a mercer, a lawyer or a grocer's 'prentice.

Enter FLUTTER.

Flut. Oh, just which you please, Sir George; so you don't make me a lord mayor. Ah, Mrs. Rackett! ——Lady Frances, your most obedient; you look—now hang me, if that's not provoking!—had your gown been of another colour, I should have said the prettiest thing you ever heard in your life.

Miss O. Pray, give it us.

Flut. I was yesterday at Mrs. Bloomer's. She was dressed all in green; no other colour to be seen but that of her face and bosom. So, says I, My dear Mrs. Bloomer! you look like a carnation just bursting from its pod.

Sir G. Wasn't that pretty? And what said her husband?

Flut. Her husband! Why, her husband laughed, and said, a cucumber would have been a better simile.

Sir G. But there are husbands, sir, who would rather have corrected than amended your comparison; I, for instance, should consider a man's complimenting my wife as an impertinence.

Flut. Why, what harm can there be in compliments? Sure they are not infectious; and, if they were, you, Sir George, of all people breathing, have reason to be satisfied about your lady's attachment; every body talks of it: that little bird there, that she killed out of jealousy, the most extraordinary instance of affection thas ever was given.

Lady F. I kill a bird through jealousy! Heavens!

Mr. Flutter, how can you impute such a cruelty to me?

Sir G. I could have forgiven you, if you had.

Flut. Oh, what a blundering fool!—No, no—now I remember—'twas your bird, Lady Frances—that's it, your bullfinch, which Sir George, in one of the refinements of his passion, sent into the wide world to seek its fortune.—He took it for a knight in disguise.

Lady F. Is it possible! Oh, Sir George, could I have imagined it was you, who deprived me of a creature I was so fond of?

Sir G. Mr. Flutter, you are one of those busy, idle, meddling people, who, from mere vacuity of mind, are the most dangerous inmates in a family. You have neither feelings nor opinions of your own; but, like a glass in a tavern, bear about those of every blockhead who gives you his;—and, because you mean no harm, think yourselves excused, though broken friendships, discords, and murders, are the consequences of your indiscretions.

Flut. [*Taking out his Tablets.*] Vacuity of mind!—What was next? I'll write down this sermon; 'tis the first I have heard since my grandmother's funeral.

Miss O. Come, Lady Frances, you see what a cruel creature your loving husband can be; so let us leave him.

Sir G. Madam, Lady Frances shall not go.

Lady F. Shall not, Sir George!—This is the first time such an expression—— [*Weeping.*

Sir G. My love! my life!

Lady F. Don't imagine I'll be treated like a child! denied what I wish, and then pacified with sweet words.

Miss O. [*Apart.*] The bullfinch! that's an excellent subject; never let it down.

Lady F. I see plainly you would deprive me of

every pleasure, as well as of my sweet bird—out of pure love!—Barbarous man!

Sir G. 'Tis well, madam;—your resentment of that circumstance proves to me, what I did not before suspect, that you are deficient both in tenderness and understanding—Tremble to think the hour approaches, in which you would give worlds for such a proof of my love. Go, madam, give yourself to the public; abandon your heart to dissipation, and see if, in the scenes of gaiety and folly that await you, you can find a recompense for the lost affection of a doting husband. [*Exit* SIR GEORGE.

Flut. Lord, what a fine thing it is to have the gift of speech! I suppose, Sir George practises at Coachmakers' Hall, or the Black Horse in Bond Street.

Lady F. He is really angry; I cannot go.

Mrs. R. Not go! Foolish creature! you are arrived at the moment which, some time or other, was sure to happen, and every thing depends on the use you make of it.

Miss O. Come, Lady Frances, don't hesitate;—the minutes are precious.

Lady F. I could find in my heart!—and yet I won't give up neither.—If I should in this instance, he'll expect it for ever.

[*Exeunt* LADY FRANCES *and* MRS. RACKETT.

Miss O. Now you act like a woman of spirit.

[*Exit.*

Flut. A fair tug, by Jupiter—between duty and pleasure!—Pleasure beats, and off we go, *Iö triumphe!*

[*Exit.*

SCENE II.

An Auction Room. Busts, Pictures, &c.

Enter SILVERTONGUE, *with* COMPANY, PUFFERS, *&c.*

1 *Lady.* Heyday, Mr. Silvertongue! what, nobody here!

Silv. Oh, my lady, we shall have company enough in a trice; if your carriage is seen at my door, no other will pass it, I am sure.

1 *Lady.* Familiar monster! [*Aside.*] That's a beautiful Diana, Mr. Silvertongue; but, in the name of wonder, how came Actæon to be placed on the top of a house?

Silv. That's a David and Bathsheba, ma'am.

1 *Lady.* Oh, I crave their pardon!—I remember the names, but know nothing of the story.

Enter more COMPANY.

1 *Gent.* Was not that Lady Frances Touchwood, coming up with Mrs. Rackett?

2 *Gent.* I think so;—yes, it is, 'faith.——Let us go nearer.

Enter LADY FRANCES, MRS. RACKETT, *and* MISS OGLE.

3 *Gent.* Any thing worthy notice to-day?

Silv. Yes, sir, this is to be the first lot:—the model of a city, in wax.

2 *Gent.* The model of a city! What city?

Silv. That I have not been able to discover; but call it Rome, Pekin, or London, 'tis still a city; you'll find in it the same jarring interests, the same passions,

the same virtues, and the same vices, whatever the name.

[LADY FRANCES *and* MISS OGLE *come forward, followed by* COURTALL.

Lady F. I wish Sir George was here.—This man follows me about, and stares at me in such a way, that I am quite uneasy.

Miss O. He has travelled, and is heir to an immense estate; so he is impertinent by patent.

Court. You are very cruel, ladies. Miss Ogle—you will not let me speak to you. As to this little scornful beauty, she has frowned me dead fifty times.

Lady F. Sir—I am a married woman. [*Confused.*

Court. A married woman! a good hint. [*Aside.*] 'Twould be a shame if such a charming woman was not married. But I see you are a Daphne just come from your sheep, and your meadows; your crook, and your waterfalls. Pray, now, who is the happy Damon, to whom you have vowed eternal truth and constancy?

Miss O. 'Tis Lady Frances Touchwood, Mr. Courtall, to whom you are speaking.

Court. Lady Frances! By Heaven, that's Saville's old flame. [*Aside.*] I beg your ladyship's pardon. I ought to have believed, that such beauty could belong only to your name—a name I have long been enamoured of; because I knew it to be that of the finest woman in the world.

[MRS. RACKETT *comes forward.*

Lady F. [*Apart.*] My dear Mrs. Rackett, I am so frightened! Here's a man making love to me, though he knows I am married.

Mrs. R. Oh, the sooner for that, my dear; don't mind him.—Was you at the Cassino last night, Mr. Courtall?

Court. I looked in.—'Twas impossible to stay. Nobody there but antiques. You'll be at Lady Brilliant's to-night, doubtless?

Mrs. R. Yes, I go with Lady Frances.

Lady F. Bless me! I did not know this gentleman was acquainted with Mrs. Rackett.—I behaved so rude to him! [*To* MISS OGLE.

Mrs. R. Come, ma'am; [*Looking at her Watch.*] 'tis past one. I protest, if we don't fly to Kensington, we shan't find a soul there.

Lady F. Won't this gentleman go with us?

Court. [*Looking surprised.*] To be sure; you make me happy, madam, beyond description.

Mrs. R. Oh, never mind him—he'll follow.

[*Exeunt* LADY FRANCES, MRS. RACKETT, *and* MISS OGLE.

Court. Lady Touchwood, with a vengeance! But 'tis always so; your reserved ladies are like ice, 'egad! —no sooner begin to soften, than they melt!

[*Following.*

ACT THE THIRD.

SCENE I.

MR. HARDY'S.

Enter LETITIA *and* MRS. RACKETT.

Mrs. R. Come, prepare, prepare; your lover is coming.

Letit. My lover! confess, now, that my absence at dinner was a severe mortification to him.

Mrs. R. I can't absolutely swear it spoiled his appetite; he ate as if he was hungry, and drank his wine as though he liked it.

Letit. What was the apology?

Mrs. R. That you were ill;—but I gave him a hint, that your extreme bashfulness could not support his eye.

Letit. If I comprehend him, aukwardness and bashfulness are the last faults he can pardon in a woman; so expect to see me transformed into the veriest maukin.

Mrs. R. You persevere then?

Letit. Certainly. I know the design is a rash one, and the event important;—it either makes Doricourt mine by all the tenderest ties of passion, or deprives me of him for ever; and never to be his wife, will afflict me less than to be his wife, and not be beloved.

Mrs. R. So you won't trust to the good old maxim, —"Marry first, and love will follow?"

Letit. As readily as I would venture my last guinea, that good fortune might follow. The woman, that has not touched the heart of a man, before he leads her to the altar, has scarcely a chance to charm it, when possession and security turn their powerful arms against her.—But here he comes—I'll disappear for a moment. Don't spare me. [*Exit* LETITIA.

Enter DORICOURT—*not seeing* MRS. RACKETT.

Doric. So! [*Looking at a Picture.*] this is my mistress, I presume.—*Ma foi!* the painter has hit her off —The downcast eye—the blushing cheek—timid—apprehensive—bashful——A tear and a prayerbook, would have made her *La Bella Magdalena*—

Give me a woman, in whose touching mien
A mind, a soul, a polish'd art is seen;
Whose motion speaks, whose poignant air can move;
Such are the darts, to wound with endless love.

Mrs. R. Is that an impromptu?

[*Touching him on the Shoulder with her Fan.*

Doric. [*Starting.*] Madam! [*Aside.*] Finely caught!—Not absolutely—it struck me during the desert, as a motto for your picture.

Mrs. R. Gallantly turned!—I perceive, however, Miss Hardy's charms have made no violent impression on you.—And who can wonder?—the poor girl's defects are so obvious.

Doric. Defects!

Mrs. R. Merely those of education.——Her father's indulgence ruined her.—*Mauvaise honte*—conceit and ignorance—all unite in the lady you are to marry.

Doric. Marry! I marry such a woman!—Your picture, I hope, is overcharged.—I marry *mauvaise honte*, pertness and ignorance!

Mrs. R. Thank your stars, that ugliness and ill-temper are not added to the list.—You must think her handsome?

Doric. Half her personal beauty would content me;—but could the Medicean Venus be animated for me, and endowed with a vulgar soul, I should become the statue, and my heart transformed to marble.

Mrs. R. Bless us!——We are in a hopeful way, then!

Doric. [*Aside.*] There must be some envy in this.—I see she is a coquette—Ha! ha! ha! And you imagine I am persuaded of the truth of your character? ha! ha! ha! Miss Hardy, I have been assured, madam, is elegant and accomplished——but one must allow for a lady's painting.

Mrs. R. [*Aside.*] I'll be even with him for that. Ha! ha! ha! and so you have found me out!——Well, I protest, I meant no harm; 'twas only to increase the *éclat* of her appearance, that I threw a veil over her charms.——Here comes the lady:—her elegance and accomplishments will announce themselves.

Enter LETITIA, *running.*

Letit. La, cousin, do you know, that our John—— Oh, dear heart!—I didn't see you, sir.

[*Hanging down her Head, and dropping behind* MRS. RACKETT.

Mrs. R. Fie, Letitia—Mr. Doricourt thinks you a woman of elegant manners. Stand forward, and confirm his opinion.

Letit. No, no; keep before me.—He's my sweetheart; and 'tis impudent to look one's sweetheart in the face, you know.

Mrs. R. You'll allow in future for a lady's painting, sir—Ha! ha! ha!

Doric. I am astonished!

Letit. Well, hang it, I'll take heart—Why, he is but a man, you know, cousin—and I'll let him see, I wasn't born in a wood, to be scared by an owl. [*Half apart; advances, and looks at him through her Fingers.*] He! he! he! [*Goes up to him, and makes a very stiff, formal Courtesy—He bows.*]—You have been a great traveller, sir, I hear.

Doric. Yes, madam.

Letit. Then I wish you'd tell us about the fine sights you saw when you went over-sea—I have read in a book, that there are some countries, where the men and women are all horses.—Did you see any of them?

Mrs. R. Mr. Doricourt is not prepared, my dear, for these inquiries—he is reflecting on the importance of the question, and will answer you—when he can.

Letit. When he can! Why, he's as slow in speech, as aunt Margery, when she's reading Thomas Aquinas;—and stands gaping, like mumchance.

Mrs. R. Have a little discretion.

Letit. Hold your tongue!—Sure, I may say what I

please before I am married, if I can't afterwards—— D'ye think a body does not know how to talk to a sweetheart—He is not the first I have had.

Doric. Indeed!

Letit. Oh, lud, he speaks!—Why, if you must know—there was the curate at home——When papa was a hunting, he used to come a suitoring, and make speeches to me out of books—Nobody knows, what a *mort* of fine things he used to say to me—and call me Venis, and Jubah, and Dinah.

Doric. And pray, fair lady, how did you answer him?

Letit. Why, I used to say, Look you Mr. Curate, don't think to come over me with your flim-flams, for a better man than ever trod in your shoes, is coming over-sea to marry me—But, 'ifags, I begin to think, I was out.—Parson Dobbins was the sprightfuller man of the two.

Doric. Surely, this cannot be Miss Hardy?

Letit. Laws, why, don't you know me?—You saw me to-day—but I was daunted before my father, and the lawyer, and all them; and did not care to speak out—so, may be, you thought I couldn't—but I can talk as fast as any body, when I know folks a little—And now I have shown my parts, I hope you'll like me better.

Enter HARDY.

Hardy. I foresee this won't do——Mr. Doricourt, may be, you take my daughter for a fool, but you are mistaken—she's as sensible a girl as any in England.

Doric. I am convinced, she has a very uncommon understanding, sir.—[*Aside.*] I did not think he had been such an ass!

Letit. My father will undo the whole.—Laws, papa, how can you think he can take me for a fool;—when

every body knows, I beat the 'Potecary at conundrums, last Christmas-time?—And didn't I make a string of names, all in riddles, for the Lady's Diary?—There was a little river, and a great house—that was Newcastle.—There was what a lamb says, and three letters—that was *Ba*, and *k-e-r*, ker, baker.—There was———

Hardy. Don't stand ba-a-ing there—you'll make me mad in a moment———I tell you, sir, that for all that, she's dev'lish sensible.

Doric. Sir, I give all possible credit to your assertions.

Letit. Laws, papa, do come along. If you stand watching, how can my sweetheart break his mind, and tell me how he admires me?

Doric. That would be difficult, indeed, madam.

Hardy. I tell you, Letty, I'll have no more of this.—I see well enough——

Letit. Laws, don't snub me before my husband—that is to be.—You'll teach him to snub me too—and, I believe, by his looks, he'd like to begin now. So let us go—cousin, you may tell the gentleman, what a genius I have—how I can cut watch papers, and work catgut—make quadrille baskets with pins, and take profiles in shade—ay, as well as the lady at No. 62, South Moulton Street, Grosvenor Square.

[*Exeunt* HARDY *and* LETITIA.

Mrs. R. What think you of my painting now?

Doric. Oh, mere water colours, madam—The lady has caricatured your picture.

Mrs. R. And how does she strike you on the whole?

Doric. Like a good design, spoiled by the incapacity of the artist. Her faults are evidently the result of her father's weak indulgence. I observed an expression in her eye, that seemed to satirise the folly of her lips.

Mrs. R. But at her age, when education is fixed, and manner becomes nature, hopes of improvement—

Doric. Would be absurd—Besides, I can't turn schoolmaster—Doricourt's wife must be incapable of improvement—but it must be, because she's got beyond it.

Mrs. R. I am pleased your misfortune sits no heavier.

Doric. Your pardon, madam—so mercurial was the hour in which I was born, that misfortunes always go plump to the bottom of my heart, like a pebble in water, and leave the surface unruffled.——I shall certainly set off for Bath, or the other world, to-night—but whether I shall use a chaise, with four swift coursers, or go off in a tangent—from the aperture of a pistol, deserves consideration—so I make my *adieus.* [*Going.*

Mrs. R. Oh, but I intreat you, postpone your journey till to-morrow—determine on which you will—you must be this night at the masquerade.

Doric. Masquerade!

Mrs. R. Why not?——If you resolve to visit the other world, you may as well take one night's pleasure first in this, you know.

Doric. 'Faith, that's very true;—ladies are the best philosophers after all—Expect me at the masquerade. [*Exit* DORICOURT.

Mrs. R. He's a charming fellow—I think Letitia shan't have him. [*Going.*

Enter HARDY.

Hardy. What's he gone?

Mrs. R. Yes; and I am glad he is—You would have ruined us!—Now, I beg, Mr. Hardy, you won't interfere in this business; it is a little out of your way. [*Exit* MRS. RACKETT.

Hardy. Hang me, if I don't though—I foresee very clearly, what will be the end of it, if I leave you to

yourselves; so I'll e'en follow him to the masquerade, and tell him all about it.—Let me see——what shall my dress be—A great mogul? No—A grenadier? No—no—that, I foresee, would make a laugh——Hang me, if I don't send to my favourite little Quick, and borrow his Jew Isaac's dress—I know the dog likes a glass of good wine; so I'll give him a bottle of my forty-eight, and he shall teach me——Ay, that's it—I'll be cunning little Isaac—If they complain of my want of wit, I'll tell them, the cursed Duenna wears the breeches, and has spoilt my parts.

[*Exit* HARDY.

SCENE II.

COURTALL'S.

Enter COURTALL, SAVILLE, *and Three* GENTLEMEN, *from an Apartment in the Back Scene—The last Three tipsey.*

Court. You shan't go yet——Another catch, and another bottle.

1 *Gent.* May I be a bottle, and an empty bottle, if you catch me at that!—Why, I am going to the masquerade. Jack ———, you know who I mean, is to meet me, and we are to have a leap at the new lustre.

2 *Gent.* And I am going to—a pilgrim— [*Hickups.*] Am not I in a pretty pickle for a pilgrim?——And Tony, here—he is going in the disguise—in the disguise—of a gentleman!

1 *Gent.* We are all very disguised—so bid them draw up—D'ye hear!

[*Exeunt the Three* GENTLEMEN.

Sav. Thy skull, Courtall, is a lady's thimble:—no, an egg shell.

Court. Nay, then you are gone too: you never aspire to similes, but in your cups.

Sav. No, no; I am steady enough—but the fumes of the wine pass directly through thy egg-shell, and leave thy brain as cool as——Hey! I am quite sober; my similes fail me.

Court. Then we'll sit down here, and have one sober bottle.

Enter DICK.

Bring a bottle and glasses. [*Exit* DICK.

Sav. I'll not swallow another drop; no, though the juice should be the true Falernian.

Court. By the bright eyes of her you love, you shall drink her health.

Enter DICK *with Bottle and Glasses, and exit.*

Sav. Ah! [*Sitting down.*] Her I loved is gone—[*Sighing.*]—She's married!

Court. Then bless your stars you are not her husband! I would be husband to no woman in Europe, who was not dev'lish rich, and dev'lish ugly.

Sav. Wherefore ugly?

Court. Because she could not have the conscience to exact those attentions that a pretty wife expects; or, if she should, her resentments would be perfectly easy to me, nobody would undertake to revenge her cause.

Sav. Thou art a most licentious fellow!

Court. I should hate my own wife, that's certain; but I have a warm heart for those of other people; and so here's to the prettiest wife in England—Lady Frances Touchwood.

Sav. Lady Frances Touchwood! I rise to drink her. [*Drinks.*] How the devil came Lady Frances in your head? I never knew you give a woman of chastity before.

Court. That's odd, for you have heard me give half

the women of fashion in England.—But, pray now, what do you take a woman of chastity to be? [*Sneeringly.*

Sav. Such a woman as Lady Frances Touchwood, sir.

Court. Oh, you are grave, sir; I remember you was an adorer of hers—Why didn't you marry her?

Sav. I had not the arrogance to look so high.—Had my fortune been worthy of her, she should not have been ignorant of my admiration.

Court. Precious fellow! What, I suppose you would not dare tell her now that you admire her?

Sav. No, nor you.

Court. By the lord, I have told her so.

Sav. Have? Impossible!

Court. Ha! ha! ha!—Is it so?

Sav. How did she receive the declaration?

Court. Why, in the old way; blushed, and frowned, and said, she was married.

Sav. What amazing things thou art capable of! I could more easily have taken the Pope by the beard, than profaned her ears with such a declaration.

Court. I shall meet her at Lady Brilliant's to-night, where I shall repeat it; and I'd lay my life, under a mask, she'll hear it all without blush or frown.

Sav. [*Rising.*] 'Tis false, sir!—She won't.

Court. She will! [*Rising.*] Nay, I'll venture to lay a round sum, that I prevail on her to go out with me ——only to taste the fresh air, I mean.

Sav. Preposterous vanity! From this moment I suspect that half the victories you have boasted are false and slanderous as your pretended influence with Lady Frances.

Court. Pretended!—How should such a fellow as you, now, who never soared beyond a cherry-cheeked daughter of a ploughman in Norfolk, judge of the influence of a man of my figure and habits? I could

show thee a list, in which there are names to shake thy faith in the whole sex?—and, to that list I have no doubt of adding the name of Lady——

Sav. Hold, sir! My ears cannot bear the profanation;—you cannot—dare not, approach her!—For your soul you dare not mention love to her! Her look would freeze the word, whilst it hovered on thy licentious lips.

Court. Whu! whu! Well, we shall see—this evening, by Jupiter, the trial shall be made.—If I fail—I fail.

Sav. I think thou dar'st not! But my life, my honour on her purity. [*Exit* SAVILLE.

Court. Hot-headed fool! But since he has brought it to this point, by gad I'll try what can be done with her ladyship—[*Musing—Rings.*]—She's frost-work, and the prejudices of education yet strong: *ergo*, passionate professions will only inflame her pride, and put her on her guard.——For other arts then!

Enter DICK.

Dick, do you know any of the servants at Sir George Touchwood's?

Dick. Yes, sir; I knows the groom, and one of the house-maids; for the matter o' that, she's my own cousin; and it was my mother that helped her to the place.

Court. Do you know Lady Frances's maid?

Dick. I can't say as how I know she.

Court. Do you know Sir George's valet?

Dick. No, sir; but Sally is very thick with Mr. Gibson, Sir George's gentleman.

Court. Then go there directly, and employ Sally to discover, whether her master goes to Lady Brilliant's this evening; and, if he does, the name of the shop that sold his habit.

Dick. Yes, sir.

Court. Be exact in your intelligence, and come to

me at Boodle's. [*Exit* DICK.] If I cannot otherwise succeed, I'll beguile her as Jove did Alcmena, in the shape of her husband. The possession of so fine a woman—the triumph over Saville, are each a sufficient motive; and united, they shall be resistless.

[*Exit* COURTALL.

SCENE III.

The Street.

Enter SAVILLE.

Sav. The air has recovered me! What have I been doing! Perhaps my petulance may be the cause of her ruin, whose honour I asserted: his vanity is piqued; —and where women are concerned, Courtall can be a villain.

Enter DICK.—*Bows, and passes hastily.*

Ha! that's his servant!——Dick!

Dick. [*Returning.*] Sir!

Sav. Where are you going, Dick?

Dick. Going! I am going, sir, where my master sent me.

Sav. Well answered;—but I have a particular reason for my inquiry, and you must tell me.

Dick. Why then, sir, I am going to call upon a cousin of mine, that lives at Sir George Touchwood's.

Sav. Very well.—There, [*Gives him Money.*] you must make your cousin drink my health.—What are you going about?

Dick. Why, sir, I believe 'tis no harm, or elseways I am sure I would not blab.—I am only going to ax if Sir George goes to the masquerade to-night, and what dress he wears.

Sav. Enough! Now, Dick, if you will call at my lodgings in your way back, and acquaint me with your

cousin's intelligence, I'll double the trifle I have given you.

Dick. Bless your honour, I'll call——never fear.
[*Exit* DICK.

Sav. Surely the occasion may justify the means:—tis doubly my duty to be Lady Frances's protector. Courtall, I see, is planning an artful scheme; but Saville shall out-plot him. [*Exit* SAVILLE.

SCENE IV.

SIR GEORGE TOUCHWOOD'S.

Enter SIR GEORGE *and* VILLERS.

Vill. For shame, Sir George! you have left Lady Frances in tears.—How can you afflict her?

Sir G. 'Tis I that am afflicted;—my dream of happiness is over—Lady Frances and I are disunited.

Vill. The devil! Why, you have been in town but ten days: she can have made no acquaintance for a Commons affair yet.

Sir G. Pho! 'tis our minds that are disunited: she no longer places her whole delight in me; she has yielded herself up to the world!

Vill. Yielded herself up to the world! Why did you not bring her to town in a cage? Then she might have taken a peep at the world!—But, after all, what has the world done? A twelvemonth since you was the gayest fellow in it:—If any body asked who dresses best?—Sir George Touchwood.—Who is the most gallant man? Sir George Touchwood.—Who is the most wedded to amusement and dissipation? Sir George Touchwood? And now Sir George is metamorphosed into a sour censor; and talks of fashionable life with as much bitterness as the old crabbed fellow in Rome.

Sir G. The moment I became possessed of such a jewel as Lady Frances, every thing wore a different

complexion; that society in which I lived with so much *éclat*, became the object of my terror; and I think of the manners of polite life as I do of the atmosphere of a pest-house.—My wife is already infected; she was set upon this morning by maids, widows, and bachelors, who carried her off in triumph, in spite of my displeasure.

Vill. Ay, to be sure; there would have been no triumph in the case, if you had not opposed it:—but I have heard the whole story from Mrs. Rackett; and I assure you, Lady Frances didn't enjoy the morning at all;—she wished for you fifty times.

Sir G. Indeed! Are you sure of that?

Vill. Perfectly sure.

Sir G. I wish I had known it:——my uneasiness at dinner was occasioned by very different ideas.

Vill. Here then she comes, to receive your apology; but if she is true woman, her displeasure will rise in proportion to your contrition;—and till you grow careless about her pardon, she won't grant it:—however, I'll leave you.—Matrimonial duets are seldom set in the style I like. [*Exit* VILLERS.

Enter LADY FRANCES.

Sir G. The sweet sorrow that glitters in these eyes, I cannot bear [*Embracing her.*] Look cheerfully, you rogue.

Lady F. I cannot look otherwise, if you are pleased with me.

Sir G. Well, Fanny, to-day you made your *entrée* in the fashionable world; tell me honestly the impressions you received.

Lady F. Indeed, Sir George, I was so hurried from place to place, that I had not time to find out what my impressions were.

Sir G. That's the very spirit of the life you have chosen.

Lady F. Every body about me seemed happy—

but every body seemed in a hurry to be happy somewhere else.

Sir G. And you like this?

Lady F. One must like what the rest of the world likes.

Sir G. Pernicious maxim!

Lady F. But, my dear Sir George, you have not promised to go with me to the masquerade.

Sir G. 'Twould be a shocking indecorum to be seen together, you know.

Lady F. Oh, no; I asked Mrs. Rackett, and she told me we might be seen together at the masquerade, —without being laughed at.

Sir G. Really?

Lady F. Indeed, to tell you the truth, I could wish it was the fashion for married people to be inseparable: for I have more heartfelt satisfaction in fifteen minutes with you at my side, than fifteen days of amusement could give me without you.

Sir G. My sweet creature! How that confession charms me.—Let us begin the fashion.

Lady F. O, impossible! We should not gain a single proselyte; and you can't conceive what spiteful things would be said of us.—At Kensington to-day a lady met us, whom we saw at court, when we were presented; she lifted up her hands in amazement!—Bless me! said she to her companion, here's Lady Frances, without Sir Hurlo Thrumbo!—My dear Mrs. Rackett, consider what an important charge you have! for Heaven's sake take her home again, or some enchanter on a flying dragon will descend and carry her off——Oh, said another, I dare say Lady Frances has a clue at her heel, like the peerless Rosamond: ——her tender swain would never have trusted her so far without such a precaution.

Sir G. Heaven and earth!—How shall innocence preserve its lustre, amidst manners so corrupt!

Enter GIBSON.

Gib. Your honour talked, I thought, something about going to the masquerade?

Sir G. Well.

Gib. Hasn't your honour?—I thought your honour had forgot to order a dress.

Lady F. Well considered, Gibson.——Come, will you be jew, turk, or heretic; a Chinese Emperor, or a ballad-singer: a rake, or a watchman?

Sir G. Oh, neither, my love; I can't take the trouble to support a character.

Lady F. You'll wear a domino then:—I saw a pink domino trimmed with blue, at the shop where I bought my habit.——Would you like it?

Sir G. Any thing, any thing.

Lady F. Then go about it directly, Gibson.—A pink domino, trimmed with blue—Come, you have not seen my dress yet—it is most beautiful; I long to have it on. [*Exeunt.*

ACT THE FOURTH.

SCENE I.

A Masquerade.

A PARTY *dancing Cotillions in front—a Variety of Characters pass and repass.*

Mountebank. Who'll buy my nostrums? who'll buy my nostrums? Here's a powder for projectors—'twill

rectify the fumes of an empty stomach, dissipate their airy castles, and make them dream of beef and pudding.

Enter HARDY, *in the Dress of* ISAAC MENDOZA.

Hardy. Why isn't it a shame to see so many stout, well-built young fellows, masquerading, and cutting *couranta's* here at home—instead of making the French cut capers to the tune of your cannon—or sweating the Spaniards with an English *Fandango?*—I foresee the end of all this.

Mask. Why, thou little testy Israelite! back to Duke's Place; and preach your tribe into a subscription for the good of the land on whose milk and honey ye fatten.—Where are your Joshuas and your Gideons, aye? What! all dwindled into stockbrokers, pedlars, and rag-men?

Hardy. No, not all. Some of us turn christians, and by degrees grow into all the privileges of Englishmen! In the second generation we are patriots, rebels, courtiers, and husbands.

[*Puts his Fingers to his Forehead.*

Two other MASKS *advance.*

3 *Mask.* What, my little Isaac!——How the devil came you here? Where's your old Margaret?

Hardy. Oh, I have got rid of her.

3 *Mask.* How?

Hardy. Why, I persuaded a young Irishman that she was a blooming plump beauty of eighteen; so they made an elopement, ha! ha! ha! and she is now the toast of Tipperary. Ha! there's Cousin Rackett and her party; they shan't know me. [*Puts on his Mask.*

Enter MRS. RACKETT, LADY FRANCES, SIR GEORGE, *and* FLUTTER.

Mrs. R. Look at this dumpling jew; he must be a Levite, by his figure. You have surely practised the

flesh-hook a long time, friend, to have raised that goodly presence.

Hardy. About as long, my brisk widow, as you have been angling for a second husband; but my hook has been better baited than yours.—You have only caught gudgeons, I see. [*Pointing to* FLUTTER.

Flut. Oh! this is one of the geniuses they hire to entertain the company with their accidental sallies—Let me look at your common-place book, friend.—I want a few good things.

Hardy. I'd oblige you, with all my heart; but you'll spoil them in repeating—or, if you should not, they'll gain you no reputation—for nobody will believe they are your own.

Sir G. He knows you, Flutter;—the little gentleman fancies himself a wit, I see.

Hardy. There's no depending on what you see—the eyes of the jealous are not to be trusted—Look to your lady.

Flut. He knows you, Sir George.

Sir G. What! am I the town talk? [*Aside.*

Hardy. I can neither see Doricourt nor Letty.—I must find them out. [*Exit* HARDY.

Mrs. R. Well, Lady Frances, is not all this charming? Could you have conceived such a brilliant assemblage of objects?

Lady F. Delightful! The days of enchantment are restored; the columns glow with sapphires and rubies. Emperors and fairies, beauties and dwarfs, meet me at every step!

Sir G. How lively are first impressions on sensible minds! In four hours, vapidity and languor will take place of that exquisite sense of joy which flutters your little heart.

Mrs. R. What an inhuman creature! Fate has not allowed us these sensations above ten times in our lives; and would you have us shorten them by anticipation?

Flut. O lord! your wise men are the greatest fools

upon earth;—they reason about their enjoyments, and analyse their pleasures, whilst the essence escapes. Look, Lady Frances; D'ye see that figure strutting in the dress of an emperor? His father retails oranges in Botolph Lane. That gipsey is a maid of honour, and that rag-man a physician.

Lady F. Why, you know every body!

Flut. Oh, every creature.—A mask is nothing at all to me.—I can give you the history of half the people here. In the next apartment there's a whole family, who, to my knowledge, have lived on water-cresses this month, to make a figure here to-night;—but, to make up for that, they'll cram their pockets with cold ducks and chickens, for a carnival to-morrow.

Lady F. Oh, I should like to see this provident family.

Flut. Honour me with your arm.

[*Exeunt* FLUTTER *and* LADY FRANCES.

Mrs. R. Come, Sir George, you shall be my beau. —We'll make the *tour* of the rooms, and meet them. Oh! your pardon, you must follow Lady Frances; or the wit and fine parts of Mr. Flutter may drive you out of her head. Ha! ha! ha!

[*Exit* MRS. RACKETT.

Sir G. I was going to follow her, and now I dare not. How can I be such a fool, as to be governed by the fear of that ridicule which I despise?

[*Exit* SIR GEORGE.

Enter DORICOURT, *meeting a* MASK.

Doric. Ha! my lord;—I thought you had been engaged at Westminster on this important night.

Mask. So I am—I slipped out as soon as Lord Trope got upon his legs; I can *badiner* here an hour or two, and be back again before he is down.——There's a fine figure! I'll address her.

Enter LETITIA.

Charity, fair lady! Charity for a poor pilgrim.

Letit. Charity! If you mean my prayers, Heaven grant thee wit, pilgrim.

Mask. That blessing would do from a devotee: from you I ask other charities;—such charities as beauty should bestow—soft looks—sweet words—and kind wishes.

Letit. Alas! I am bankrupt of these, and forced to turn beggar myself.——There he is!—how shall I catch his attention?

Mask. Will you grant me no favour?

Letit. Yes, one—I'll make you my partner—not for life, but through the soft mazes of a minuet.—Dare you dance?

Doric. Some spirit in that.

Mask. That, lady, is against my vow; but there is a man of the world.

Doric. Do you know her, my lord?

Mask. No. Such a woman as that would formerly have been known in any disguise; but beauty is now common—Venus seems to have given her *cestus* to the whole sex.

A Minuet.

Doric. [*During the Minuet.*] She dances divinely! [*When ended.*] Somebody must know her? Let us inquire who she is. [*Exit.*

Enter SAVILLE *and* KITTY WILLIS, *habited like* LADY FRANCES.

Sav. I have seen Courtall in Sir George's habit, though he endeavoured to keep himself concealed. Go, and seat yourself in the tea-room, and on no account discover your face:—remember too, Kitty, that the woman you are to personate is a woman of virtue.

Kitty. I am afraid I shall find that a difficult cha-

racter; indeed I believe it is seldom kept up through a whole masquerade.

Sav. Of that you can be no judge.——Follow my directions, and you shall be rewarded. [*Exit* KITTY.

Enter DORICOURT.

Doric. Ha! Saville! Did you see a lady dance just now?

Sav. No.

Doric. Very odd. Nobody knows her.

Sav. Where is Miss Hardy?

Doric. Cutting watch papers, and making conundrums, I suppose.

Sav. What do you mean?

Doric. 'Faith, I hardly know. She's not here, however, Mrs. Racket tells me.—I asked no further.

Sav. Your indifference seems increased.

Doric. 'Tis advanced thirty-two degrees towards hatred.

Sav. You are jesting?

Doric. Then it must be with a very ill grace, my dear Saville: for I never felt so seriously: do you know, the creature's almost an ideot?

Sav. What!

Doric. An ideot. What the devil shall I do with her? Egad! I think I'll feign myself mad—and then Hardy will propose to cancel the engagements.

Sav. An excellent expedient! I must leave you; you are mysterious, and I can't stay to unravel you.—I came here to watch over innocence and beauty.

Doric. The guardian of innocence and beauty at three-and-twenty! Is there not a cloven foot under that black gown, Saville?

Sav. No, 'faith. Courtall is here on a most detestable design. I found means to get a knowledge of the lady's dress, and have brought a girl to personate

her, whose reputation cannot be hurt.—You shall know the result to-morrow. Adieu. [*Exit* SAVILLE.

Doric. [*Musing.*] Yes, I think that will do. I'll feign myself mad, fee the doctor, to pronounce me incurable, and when the parchments are destroyed—

[*As he stands in a musing Posture,*

Enter LETITIA.

Letit. You have chosen an odd situation for study. Fashion and taste preside in this spot:—They throw their spells around you:—ten thousand delights spring up at their command;—and you, a stoic—a being without senses, are wrapt in reflection.

Doric. And you, the most charming being in the world, awaken me to admiration. Did you come from the stars?

Letit. Yes, and I shall reascend in a moment.

Doric. Pray show me your face before you go.

Letit. Beware of imprudent curiosity; it lost Paradise.

Doric. Eve's curiosity was raised by the devil;—'tis an angel tempts mine.—So your allusion is not in point.

Letit. But why would you see my face?

Doric. To fall in love with it.

Letit. And what then?

Doric. Why, then—Ay, curse it! there's the rub! [*Aside.*

Letit. Your mistress will be angry;—but, perhaps you have no mistress?

Doric. Yes, yes, and a sweet one it is!

Letit. What! is she old?

Doric. No.

Letit. Ugly?

Doric. No.

Letit. What then!

Doric. Pho! don't talk about her; but show me your face.

Letit. My vanity forbids it ;- -'twould frighten you.

Doric. Impossible! Your shape is graceful, your air bewitching, your bosom transparent, and your chin would tempt me to kiss it, if I did not see a pouting red lip above it, that demands—

Letit. You grow too free.

Doric. Show me your face, then—only half a glance.

Letit. Not for worlds !

Doric. What! you will have a little gentle force ? [*Attempts to seize her Mask.*

Letit. I am gone for ever ! [*Exit.*

Doric. 'Tis false ;—I'll follow to the end. [*Exit.*

FLUTTER, LADY FRANCES, *and* SAVILLE *advance.*

Lady F. How can you be thus interested for a stranger ?

Sav. Goodness will have interest ; its home is heaven : on earth 'tis but a wanderer. Imprudent lady ! why have you left the side of your protector ? Where is your husband ?

Flut. Why, what's that to him ?

Lady F. Surely it can't be merely his habit ;—— there's something in him that awes me.

Flut. Pho ! 'tis only his grey beard. I know him ; he keeps a lottery office on Cornhill.

Sav. My province, as an enchanter, lays open every secret to me, lady ! there are dangers abroad—Beware! [*Exit.*

Lady F. 'Tis very odd ; his manner has made me tremble. Let us seek Sir George.

Flut. He is coming towards us.

COURTALL *comes forward, habited like* SIR GEORGE.

Court. There she is! If I can but disengage her from that fool, Flutter—crown me, ye schemers, with immortal wreaths !

Lady F. O, my dear Sir George! I rejoice to meet you—an old conjurer has been frightening me with his prophecies.—Where's Mrs. Rackett?

Court. In the dancing room.—I promised to send you to her, Mr. Flutter.

Flut. Ah; she wants me to dance. With all my heart. [*Exit.*

Lady F. Why do you keep on your mask?—'tis too warm.

Court. 'Tis very warm—I want air—let us go.

Lady F. You seem quite agitated.—Shan't we bid our company adieu?

Court. No, no;—there's no time for forms. I'll just give directions to the carriage, and be with you in a moment. [*Going steps back.*] Put on your mask; I have a particular reason for it. [*Exit.*

SAVILLE *advances with* KITTY.

Sav. Now, Kitty, you know your lesson. Lady Frances [*Takes off his Mask.*] let me lead you to your husband.

Lady F. Heavens! Is Mr. Saville the conjurer? Sir George is just stept to the door, to give directions—We are going home immediately.

Sav. No, madam, you are deceived: Sir George is this way.

Lady F. This is astonishing!

Sav. Be not alarmed: you have escaped a snare, and shall be in safety in a moment.

[*Exeunt* SAVILLE *and* LADY FRANCES.

Enter COURTALL, *and seizes* KITTY'S *Hand.*

Court. Now.

Kitty. 'Tis pity to go so soon.

Court. Perhaps I may bring you back, my angel—but go now you must.

[*Exeunt* COURTALL *and* KITTY.—*Music.*

DORICOURT *and* LETITIA *come forward*.

Doric. By Heavens! I never was charmed till now. —English beauty—French vivacity—wit—elegance. Your name, my angel! tell me your name, though you persist in concealing your face.

Letit. My name has a spell in it.

Doric. I thought so; it must be charming.

Letit. But, if revealed, the charm is broke.

Doric. I'll answer for its force.

Letit. Suppose it Harriet, or Charlotte, or Maria —or—

Doric. Hang Harriet, and Charlotte, and Maria— the name your father gave ye!

Letit. That can't be worth knowing, 'tis so transient a thing.

Doric. How transient?

Letit. Heav'n forbid my name should be lasting till I am married.

Doric. Married! the chains of matrimony are too heavy and vulgar for such a spirit as yours. The flowery wreaths of Cupid are the only bands you should wear.

Letit. They are the lightest, I believe: but 'tis possible to wear those of marriage gracefully.—Throw them loosely round, and twist them in a true-lover's knot for the bosom.

Doric. An angel! But what will you be when a wife.

Letit. A woman.—If my husband should prove a churl, a fool, or a tyrant, I'd break his heart, ruin his fortune, elope with the first pretty fellow that asked me—and return the contempt of the world with scorn, whilst my feelings preyed upon my life.

Doric. Amazing!—[*Aside.*] What if you loved him, and he were worthy of your love?

Letit. Why, then I'd be any thing—and all!— grave, gay, capricious—the soul of whim, the spirit

G

of variety—live with him in the eye of fashion, or in the shade of retirement—change my country, my sex —feast with him in an Esquimaux hut, or a Persian pavilion—join him in the victorious war-dance on the borders of Lake Ontario, or sleep to the soft breathings of the flute in the cinnamon groves of Ceylon—dig with him in the mines of Golconda, or enter the dangerous precincts of the Mogul's seraglio ——cheat him of his wishes, and overturn his empire, to restore the husband of my heart to the blessings of liberty and love.

Doric. Delightful wildness! oh to catch thee, and hold thee for ever in this little cage!

[*Attempting to clasp her.*

Letit. Hold sir. Though Cupid must give the bait that tempts me to the snare, 'tis Hymen must spread the net to catch me.

Doric. 'Tis in vain to assume airs of coldness—Fate has ordained you mine.

Letit. How do you know?

Doric. I feel it here. I never met with a woman so perfectly to my taste; and I won't believe it formed you so, on purpose to tantalize me.

Letit. This moment is worth a whole existence!

[*Aside.*

Doric. Come, show me your face, and rivet my chains.

Letit. To-morrow you shall be satisfied.

Doric. To-morrow! and not to night?

Letit. No.

Doric. Where then shall I wait on you to-morrow? —Where see you?

Letit. You shall see me in an hour when you least expect me.

Doric. Why all this mystery?

Letit. I like to be mysterious. At present be content to know that I am a woman of family and fortune.

Doric. Let me see you to your carriage.

Letit. As you value knowing me, stir not a step. If I am followed, you never see me more. Adieu. [*Exit.*

Enter HARDY.

Hardy. Adieu! then I'm come in at the fag end! [*Aside.*

Doric. Barbarous creature! She's gone! What, and is this really serious?—Am I in love?—Pho! it can't be.

Enter FLUTTER.

O Flutter, do you know that charming creature?

Flut. What charming creature? I passed a thousand.

Doric. She went out at that door, as you entered.

Flut. Oh, yes;—I know her very well.

Doric. Do you my dear fellow, who?

Flut. She's kept by Lord George Jennett.

Hardy. Impudent scoundrel! [*Aside.*] I foresee I shall cut his throat.

Doric. Kept!

Flut. Yes; Colonel Gorget had her first;—then Mr. Loveill;—then—I forget exactly how many; and at last she's Lord George's. [*Talks to other Masks.*

Doric. I'll murder Gorget, poison Lord George, and shoot myself.

Hardy. Now's the time, I see, to clear up the whole. Mr. Doricourt!—I say—Flutter was mistaken; I know who you are in love with.

Doric. A strange *rencontre!* Who?

Hardy. My Letty.

Doric. Oh! I understand your rebuke;—'tis too soon, sir, to assume the father-in-law.

Hardy. Zounds! what do you mean by that? I tell you that the lady you admire, is Letitia Hardy.

Doric. I am glad you are so well satisfied with the state of my heart.—I wish I was! [*Exit.*

Hardy. Stop a moment.—Stop, I say! What, you won't? Very well—if I don't play you a trick for this, may I never be a grandfather! I'll plot with Letty now, and not against her; aye, hang me if I don't! There's something in my head, that shall tingle in his heart. He shall have a lecture upon impatience, that I foresee he'll be the better for as long as he lives. [*Exit.*

SAVILLE *comes forward, with* FLUTTER *and* GENTLEMEN.

Sav. Flutter, come with us; we're going to raise a laugh at Courtall's.

Flut. With all my heart. "Live to live," was my father's motto: "Live to laugh," is mine. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

COURTALL'S.

Enter KITTY *and* COURTALL.

Kitty. Where have you brought me, Sir George? This is not our home!

Court. 'Tis my home, beautiful Lady Frances! [*Kneels, and takes off his Mask.*] Oh, forgive the ardency of my passion, which has compelled me to deceive you!

Kitty. Mr. Courtall! what will become of me?

Court. Oh, say but that you pardon the wretch who adores you. Did you but know the agonizing tortures of my heart, since I had the felicity of conversing with you this morning—or the despair that now— [*Knock.*

Kitty. Oh, I'm undone!

Court. Zounds! my dear Lady Frances! I am not at home! Rascal! do you hear?—Let nobody in; I am not at home!

Serv. [*Without*.] Sir, I told the gentlemen so.

Court. Eternal curses! they are coming up. Step into this room, adorable creature! one moment; I'll throw them out of the window, if they stay three.

[*Exit* KITTY, *through the back Scene*.

Enter SAVILLE, FLUTTER, *and* GENTLEMEN.

Flut. O Gemini! beg the petticoat's pardon.—Just saw a corner of it.

1 *Gent*. No wonder admittance was so difficult. I thought you took us for bailiffs.

Court. Upon my soul, I am devilish glad to see you—but you perceive how I am circumstanced. Excuse me at this moment.

2 *Gent*. Tell us who 'tis, then.

Court. Oh, fie!

Flut. We won't blab.

Court. I can't, upon honour.—Thus far—She's a woman of the first characterand rank. Saville, [*Takes him aside*.] have I influence, or have I not?

Sav. Why, sure, you do not insinuate—

Court. No, not insinuate, but swear, that she's now in my bedchamber; by gad, I don't deceive you.—There's generalship, you rogue! such an humble, distant, sighing fellow as thou art, at the end of a six months siege, would have boasted of a kiss from her glove. I only give the signal, and—pop!—she's in my arms!

Sav. What, Lady Fran——

Court. Hush! You shall see her name to-morrow morning in red letters at the end of my list. Gentlemen, you must excuse me now. Come and drink chocolate at twelve, but—

Sav. Ay, let us go, out of respect to the lady :—'tis a person of rank.

Flut. Is it ?—Then I'll have a peep at her. [*Runs to the Door in the back Scene.*]

Court. This is too much. [*Trying to prevent him.*

1 *Gent.* By Jupiter, we'll all have a peep.

Court. Gentlemen, consider—for Heaven's sake—a lady of quality. What will be the consequences ?

Flut. The consequences !—Why, you'll have your throat cut, that's all—but I'll write your elegy. So now for the door ! [*Part open the Door, whilst the rest hold* COURTALL.]—Beg your ladyship's pardon, whoever you are : [*Leads her out.*] Emerge from darkness, like the glorious sun, and bless the wond'ring circle with your charms. [*Takes off her Mask.*

Sav. Kitty Willis ! Ha ! ha ! ha !

Omnes. Kitty Willis ! ha ! ha ! ha ! Kitty Willis !

1 *Gent.* Why, what a fellow you are, Courtall, to attempt imposing on your friends in this manner ! A lady of quality !—an earl's daughter !—Your ladyship's most obedient—Ha ! ha ! ha !

Sav. Courtall, have you influence, or have you not ?

Flut. The man's moon-struck.

Court. Hell and ten thousand furies seize you all together.

Kitty. What, me too, Mr. Courtall ? me, whom you have knelt to, prayed to, and adored ?

Flut. That's right, Kitty; give him a little more.

Court. Disappointed and laughed at !

Sav. Laughed at, and despised. I have fulfilled my design, which was to expose your villany, and laugh at your presumption. Adieu, sir ; remember how you again boast of your influence with women of rank ; and when you next want amusement, dare not to look up to the virtuous and to the noble for a companion. [*Exit, leading* KITTY.

Flut. And, Courtall, before you carry a lady into

your bedchamber again, look under her mask, d'ye hear? [*Exit*.

Court. There's no bearing this! I'll set off for Paris directly. [*Exit*.

ACT THE FIFTH.

SCENE I.

HARDY'S.

Enter HARDY *and* VILLERS.

Vill. Whimsical enough! Dying for her, and hates her! Believes her a fool, and a woman of brilliant understanding!

Hardy. As true as you are alive;—but when I went up to him last night, at the Pantheon, out of downright goodnature, to explain things—my gentleman whips round upon his heel, and snapt me as short as if I had been a beggar woman with six children, and he overseer of the parish.

Vill. Here comes the wonder worker.

Enter LETITIA.

Here comes the enchantress, who can go to masquerades, and sing and dance, and talk a man out of his wits!—But pray, have we morning masquerades?

Letit. Oh, no—but I am so enamoured of this all-conquering habit, that I could not resist putting it on, the moment I had breakfasted. I shall wear it on the day I am married, and then lay it by in spices,—like the miraculous robes of St. Bridget.

Vill. That's as most brides do. The charms, that helped to catch the husband, are generally laid by, one after another, till the lady grows a downright wife, and then runs crying to her mother, because she has transformed her lover into a downright husband.

Hardy. Listen to me.—I han't slept to-night, for thinking of plots to plague Doricourt;—and they drove one another out of my head so quick, that I was as giddy as a goose, and could make nothing of them—I wish to goodness you could contrive something.

Vill. Contrive to plague him! Nothing so easy. Don't undeceive him, madam, till he is your husband. Marry him while he possesses the sentiments you laboured to give him of Miss Hardy—and when you are his wife—

Letit. Oh, Heavens! I see the whole—that's the very thing. My dear Mr. Villers, you are the divinest man!

Vill. Don't make love to me, hussey.

Enter MRS. RACKETT.

Mrs. R. No, pray don't—for I design to have Villers myself, in about six years.—There's an oddity in him that pleases me.—He holds women in contempt; and I should like to have an opportunity of breaking his heart for that.

Vill. And when I am heartily tired of life, I know no woman whom I would with more pleasure make my executioner.

Hardy. It cannot be—I foresee it will be impossible to bring it about. You know the wedding wasn't

to take place this week, or more—and Letty will never be able to play the fool so long.

Vill. The knot shall be tied to-night.—I have it all here, [*Pointing to his Forehead.*] the license is ready. —Feign yourself ill; send for Doricourt, and tell him you can't go out of the world in peace, except you see the ceremony performed.

Hardy. I feign myself ill! I could as soon feign myself a Roman ambassador.——I was never ill in my life, but with the tooth ache—when Letty's mother was a breeding, I had all the qualms.

Vill. Oh, I have no fears for you.—But what says Miss Hardy? Are you willing to make the irrevocable vow before night?

Letit. Oh, Heavens!—I—I—'Tis so exceeding sudden, that really——

Mrs. R. That really she is frightened out of her wits—lest it should be impossible to bring matters about. But I have taken the scheme into my protection, and you shall be Mrs. Doricourt before night. Come, [*To* MR. HARDY.] to bed directly: your room shall be crammed with phials, and all the apparatus of death;—then, heigh presto! for Doricourt.

Vill. You go and put off your conquering dress, [*To* LETTY.] and get all your aukward airs ready—And you practise a few groans, [*To* HARDY.]—And you—if possible—an air of gravity, [*To* MRS. RACKET.] I'll answer for the plot.

Letit. Married in jest! 'Tis an odd idea! Well, I'll venture it. [*Exeunt* LETITIA and MRS. RACKETT.

Vill. Ay, I'll be sworn! [*Looks at his Watch.*] 'Tis past three. The budget's to be opened this morning. I'll just step down to the house.—Will you go?

Hardy. What! with a mortal sickness?

Vill. What a blockhead! I believe if half of us were to stay away with mortal sicknesses, it would be

for the health of the nation. Good morning.—I'll call and feel your pulse as I come back. [*Exit.*

Hardy. You won't find them over brisk, I fancy. I foresee some ill happening from this making believe to die before one's time. But, hang it—a hem!—I am a stout man yet; only fifty-six—What's that? In the last yearly bills, there were three lived to above an hundred. Fifty-six!—Fiddle-de-dee! I am not afraid, not I. [*Exit.*

SCENE II.

DORICOURT'S.

DORICOURT *in his Robe de Chambre.*

Enter SAVILLE.

Sav. Undressed so late?

Doric. I did'nt go to bed till late—'twas late before I slept—late when I rose. Do you know Lord George Jennett?

Sav. Yes.

Doric. Has he a mistress?

Sav. Yes.

Doric. What sort of a creature is she?

Sav. Why, she spends him three thousand a year, with the ease of a duchess, and entertains his friends, with the grace of a Ninon. Ergo, she is handsome, spirited, and clever. [DORICOURT *walks about disordered.*] In the name of caprice, what ails you?

Doric. You have hit it—*Elle est mon caprice.*—The mistress of Lord George Jennett is my caprice—Oh, insufferable!

Sav. What, you saw her at the masquerade?

Doric. Saw her, loved her, died for her—without

knowing her—And now, the curse is, I can't hate her.

Sav. Ridiculous enough! All this distress about a kept woman, whom any man may have, I dare swear, in a fortnight—They've been jarring some time.

Doric. Have her! The sentiment I have conceived for the witch is so unaccountable, that, in that line, I cannot bear her idea. Was she a woman of honour, for a wife, I could adore her—but, I really believe, if she should send me an assignation, I should hate her.

Sav. Hey day! This sounds like love. What becomes of poor Miss Hardy?

Doric. Her name has given me an ague! Dear Saville, how shall I contrive to make old Hardy cancel the engagements! The moiety of the estate, which he will forfeit, shall be his the next moment, by deed of gift.

Sav. Let me see—Can't you get it insinuated that you are a devilish wild fellow; that you are an infidel, and attached to wenching, gaming, and so forth?

Doric. Ay, such a character might have done some good two centuries back. But who the devil can it frighten now?—I believe it must be the mad scheme at last.—There, will that do for a grin?

Sav. Ridiculous!—But, how are you certain that the woman who has so bewildered you belongs to Lord George?

Doric. Flutter told me so.

Sav. Then fifty to one against the intelligence.

Doric. It must be so. There was a mystery in her manner, for which nothing else can account. [*A violent Rap.*] Who can this be? [SAVILLE *looks out.*

Sav. The proverb is your answer—'tis Flutter himself. Tip him a scene of the madman, and see how it takes.

Doric. I will—a good way to send it about town. Shall it be of the melancholy kind, or the raving?

Sav. Rant!—rant!—Here he comes.

Doric. Talk not to me, who can pull comets by the beard, and overset an island!

Enter FLUTTER.

There! This is he!—this is he, who hath sent my poor soul, without coat or breeches, to be tossed about in ether, like a duck-feather! Villain, give me my soul again!

Flut. Upon my soul, I hav'n't got it. [*Exceedingly frightened.*

Sav. Oh, Mr. Flutter, what a melancholy sight!—I little thought to have seen my poor friend reduced to this.

Flut. Mercy defend me! What, is he mad?

Sav. You see how it is. A cursed Italian lady—Jealousy—gave him a drug; and every full of the moon—

Doric. Moon! Who dares talk of the moon? The patroness of genius—the rectifier of wits—the—Oh! here she is!—I feel her—she tugs at my brain—she has it—she has it—Oh! [*Exit.*

Flut. Well, this is dreadful! exceeding dreadful, I protest. Have you had Monro?

Sav. Not yet. The worthy Miss Hardy—what a misfortune!

Flut. Ay, very true.—Do they know it?

Sav. Oh, no; the paroxysm seized him but this morning.

Flut. Adieu; I can't stay. [*Going in great Haste.*

Sav. But you must [*Holding him.*] stay, and assist me:—perhaps he'll return again in a moment; and, when he is in this way, his strength is prodigious.

Flut. Can't, indeed—can't, upon my soul. [*Going.*

Sav. Flutter—don't make a mistake, now;—remember, 'tis Doricourt that's mad.

Flut. Yes—you mad.

Sav. No, no; Doricourt.

Flut. Egad, I'll say you are both mad, and then I can't mistake. [*Exeunt severally.*

SCENE III.

SIR GEORGE TOUCHWOOD'S.

Enter SIR GEORGE *and* LADY FRANCES.

Sir G. The bird is escaped—Courtall is gone to France.

Lady F. Heaven and earth! Have you been to seek him?

Sir G. Seek him! Ay.

Lady F. How did you get his name? I should never have told it you.

Sir G. I learnt it in the first coffeehouse I entered. —Every body is full of the story.

Lady F. Thank Heaven, he's gone!—But I have a story for you—The Hardy family are forming a plot upon your friend Doricourt, and we are expected in the evening to assist.

Sir G. With all my heart, my angel; but I can't stay to hear it unfolded. They told me Mr. Saville would be at home in half an hour, and I am impatient to see him. The adventure of last night——

Lady F. Think of it only with gratitude. The danger I was in has overset a new system of conduct, that, perhaps, I was too much inclined to adopt. But, henceforward, my dear Sir George, you shall be my constant companion and protector. And, when they ridicule the unfashionable monsters, the felicity of our hearts will make their satire pointless.

Sir G. Charming angel! You almost reconcile me to Courtall. Hark! Here's company. [*Stepping to the Door.*] 'Tis your lively widow—I'll step down the back stairs to escape her. [*Exit.*

Enter MRS RACKETT.

Mrs. R. Oh, Lady Frances! I am shocked to death.—Have you received a card from us?

Lady F. Yes; within these twenty minutes.

Mrs. R. Ay, 'tis of no consequence.—'Tis all over —Doricourt's mad.

Lady F. Mad!

Mrs. R. My poor Letitia!—Just as we were enjoying ourselves with the prospect of a scheme that was planned for their mutual happiness, in came Flutter, breathless, with the intelligence:—I flew here to know if you had heard it.

Lady F. No, indeed—and I hope it is one of Mr. Flutter's dreams.

Enter SAVILLE.

Apropos; now we shall be informed. Mr. Saville, I rejoice to see you, though Sir George will be disappointed: he's gone to your lodgings.

Sav. I should have been happy to have prevented Sir George. I hope your ladyship's adventure last night did not disturb your dreams?

Lady F. Not at all; for I never slept a moment. My escape, and the importance of my obligations to you, employed my thoughts. But we have just had shocking intelligence—Is it true that Doricourt is mad?

Sav. So; the business is done. [*Aside.*]—Madam, I am sorry to say, that I have just been a melancholy witness of his ravings; he was in the height of a paroxysm.

Mrs. R. Oh, there can be no doubt of it! Flutter

told us the whole history. Some Italian princess gave him a drug, in a box of sweetmeats, sent to him by her own page; and it renders him lunatic every month. Poor Miss Hardy! I never felt so much on any occasion in my life.

Sav. To soften your concern, I will inform you, madam, that Miss Hardy is less to be pitied than you imagine.

Mrs. R. Why so, sir?

Sav. 'Tis rather a delicate subject—but he did not love Miss Hardy.

Mrs. R. He did love Miss Hardy, sir, and would have been the happiest of men.

Sav. Pardon me, madam; his heart was not only free from that lady's chains, but absolutely captivated by another.

Mrs. R. No, sir—no. It was Miss Hardy who captivated him. She met him last night at the masquerade, and charmed him in disguise. He professed the most violent passion for her; and a plan was laid this evening to cheat him into happiness.

Sav. Ha! ha! ha!—Upon my soul, I must beg your pardon! I have not eaten of the Italian princess's box of sweetmeats, sent by her own page; and yet I am as mad as Doricourt, ha! ha! ha!

Mrs. R. So it appears. What can all this mean?

Sav. Why, madam, he is at present in his perfect senses; but he'll lose them in ten minutes, through joy. The madness was only a feint, to avoid marrying Miss Hardy, ha! ha! ha!—I'll carry him the intelligence directly. [*Going.*

Mrs. R. Not for worlds. I owe him revenge, now, for what he has made us suffer. You must promise not to divulge a syllable I have told you; and when Doricourt is summoned to Mr. Hardy's, prevail on him to come—madness and all.

Lady F. Pray do. I should like to see him showing off, now I am in the secret.

Sav. You must be obeyed, though 'tis inhuman to conceal his happiness.

Mrs. R. I am going home; so I'll set you down at his lodgings, and acquaint you, by the way, with our whole scheme. *Allons!*

Sav. I attend you. [*Leading her out.*

Mrs. R. You won't fail us?

[*Exeunt* SAVILLE *and* MRS. RACKETT.

Lady F. No; depend on us. [*Exit.*

SCENE IV.

DORICOURT'S.

DORICOURT *seated, reading.*

Doric. [*Flings away the Book.*] What effect can the morals of fourscore have on a mind torn with passion? [*Musing.*] Is it possible such a soul as hers can support itself in so humiliating a situation? A kept woman! [*Rising.*] Well, well—I am glad it is so—I am glad it is so!

Enter SAVILLE.

Sav. What a happy dog you are, Doricourt! I might have been mad, or beggared, or pistoled, myself, without its being mentioned—But you, forsooth! the whole female world is concerned for. I reported the state of your brain to five different women. The lip of the first trembled; the white bosom of the second heaved a sigh; the third ejaculated, and turned her eye—to the glass; the fourth blessed herself: and the fifth said, whilst she pinned a curl, "Well, now, perhaps, he'll be an amusing companion: his native dulness was intolerable."

Doric. Envy! sheer envy, by the smiles of Hebe! —There are not less than forty pair of the brightest

eyes in town will drop crystals, when they hear of my misfortune.

Sav. Well, but I have news for you:—Poor Hardy is confined to his bed; they say he is going out of the world by the first post, and he wants to give you his blessing.

Doric. Ill! so ill! I am sorry from my soul. He's a worthy little fellow—if he had not the gift of fore-seeing so strongly.

Sav. Well; you must go and take leave.

Doric. What! to act the lunatic in the dying man's chamber?

Sav. Exactly the thing; and will bring your business to a short issue: for his last commands must be, that you are not to marry his daughter.

Doric. That's true, by Jupiter!—and yet, hang it, impose upon a poor fellow at so serious a moment!—I can't do it.

Sav. You must, 'faith. I am answerable for your appearance, though it should be in a strait waistcoat. He knows your situation, and seems the more desirous of an interview.

Doric. I don't like encountering Rackett.—She's an arch little devil, and will discover the cheat.

Sav. There's a fellow!—Cheated ninety-nine women, and now afraid of the hundredth.

Doric. And with reason—for that hundredth is a widow. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE V.

HARDY'S.

Enter MRS. RACKETT *and* MISS OGLE.

Miss O. And so Miss Hardy is actually to be married to-night?

Mrs. R. If her fate does not deceive her. You are apprised of the scheme, and we hope it will succeed.

Miss O. Deuce take her! she's six years younger than I am, [*Aside.*]—Is Mr. Doricourt handsome?

Mrs. R. Handsome, generous, young, and rich.—There's a husband for ye! Isn't he worth pulling caps for?

Miss O. I' my conscience, the widow speaks as though she'd give cap, ears, and all for him. [*Aside.*] I wonder you didn't try to catch this wonderful man, Mrs. Rackett?

Mrs. R. Really, Miss Ogle, I had not time. Besides, when I marry, so many stout young fellows will hang themselves, that, out of regard to society, in these sad times, I shall postpone it for a few years.—This will cost her a new lace—I heard it crack. [*Aside.*

Enter SIR GEORGE *and* LADY FRANCES.

Sir G. Well, here we are. But where's the knight of the woeful countenance?

Mrs. R. Here soon, I hope—for a woeful night it will be without him.

Sir G. Oh, fie! do you condescend to pun?

Mrs. R. Why not? It requires genius to make a good pun—some men of bright parts can't reach it. I know a lawyer, who writes them on the back of his briefs; and says they are of great use—in a dry cause.

Enter FLUTTER.

Flut. Here they come! Here they come!—Their coach stopped as mine drove off.

Sav. [*Without.*] Come, let me guide you!—This way, my poor friend! Why are you so furious?

Doric. [*Without.*] The house of death—to the house of death!

Enter DORICOURT *and* SAVILLE.

Ah! this is the spot!

Lady F. How wild and fiery he looks!

Miss O. Now, I think, he looks terrified!

Mrs. R. I never saw a madman before—Let me examine him—Will he bite?

Sav. Pray keep out of his reach, ladies—You don't know your danger. He's like a wild cat, if a sudden thought seizes him.

Mrs. R. You talk like a keeper of wild cats—How much do you demand for showing the monster?

Doric. I don't like this—I must rouse their sensibility. There! there she darts through the air in liquid flames! Down again! Now I have her—Oh, she burns! she scorches!—Oh! she eats into my very heart!

Omnes. Ha! ha! ha!

Doric. I am laughed at!

Mrs. R. Laughed at—ay, to be sure; why, I could play the madman better than you. There! there she is! Now I have her! Ha! ha! ha?

Doric. I'll leave the house:——I'm covered with confusion: [*Going.*

Sir G. Stay, sir—You must not go. 'Twas poorly done, Mr. Doricourt, to affect madness, rather than fulfil your engagements.

Doric. Affect madness! Saville, what can I do?

Sav. Since you are discovered, confess the whole.

Doric. Yes; since my designs have been so unaccountably discovered, I will avow the whole. I cannot love Miss Hardy—and I will never——

Sav. Hold, my dear Doricourt! What will the world say to such——

Doric. Damn the world! What will the world give me for the loss of happiness? Must I sacrifice my peace, to please the world?

Sir G. Yes, every thing, rather than branded with dishonour.

Lady F. Though our arguments should fail, there is a pleader, whom you surely cannot withstand—the dying Mr. Hardy supplicates you not to forsake his child.

Sir G. The dying Mr. Hardy!
Flut. The dying Mr. Hardy!

Enter VILLERS.

Vill. The dying Mr. Hardy requests you to grant him a moment's conversation, Mr. Doricourt, though you should persist to send him miserable to the grave. Let me conduct you to his chamber.

Doric. Oh, ay, any where; to the antipodes—to the moon—Carry me—Do with me what you will.

Mrs. R. I'll follow, and let you know what passes.

[*Exeunt* VILLERS, DORICOURT, MRS. RACKETT, *and* MISS OGLE.

Flut. Ladies, ladies, have the charity to take me with you, that I may make no blunder in repeating the story. [*Exit* FLUTTER.

Lady F. Sir George, you don't know Mr. Saville.

[*Exit* LADY FRANCES.

Sir G. Ten thousand pardons; I have been with the utmost impatience at your door twice to-day.

Sav. I am concerned you had so much trouble, Sir George.

Sir G. Trouble! what a word!——I hardly know how to address you; Your having preserved Lady Frances in so imminent a danger—Start not, Saville; to protect Lady Frances was my right. You have wrested from me my dearest privilege.

Sav. I hardly know how to answer such a reproach. I cannot apologize for what I have done.

Sir G. I do not mean to reproach you, I hardly know what I mean. There is one method by which you may restore peace to me.

Sav. Pray explain yourself.

Sir G. I have a sister, Saville, who is amiable; and you are worthy of her. I shall give her a commission to steal your heart, out of revenge for what you have done.

Sav. I am infinitely honoured, Sir George; but—

Sir G. I cannot listen to a sentence which begins with so unpromising a word. You must go with us into Hampshire; and, if you see each other with the eyes I do, your felicity will be complete. I know no one to whose heart I would so readily commit the care of my sister's happiness.

Sav. I will attend you to Hampshire with pleasure; but not on the plan of retirement. Society has claims on Lady Frances that forbid it.

Sir G. Claims, Saville!

Sav. Yes, claims; Lady Frances was born to be the ornament of courts. She is sufficiently alarmed, not to wander beyond the reach of her protector; and, from the British court, the most tenderly-anxious husband could not wish to banish his wife. Bid her keep in her eye the bright example who presides there; the splendour of whose rank yields to the superior lustre of her virtue.

Enter MRS. RACKETT, LADY FRANCES, MISS OGLE, *and* FLUTTER.

Mrs. R Oh, Heavens! do you know——

Flut. Let me tell the story.- As soon as Doricourt—

Mrs. R. I protest you shan't—said Mr. Hardy—-

Flut. No, 'twas Doricourt spoke first—says he—No, 'twas the Parson—says he——

Mrs. R. Stop his mouth, Sir George—he'll spoil the tale.

Sir G. Never heed circumstances—the result—the esult.

Mrs. R. No, no; you shall have it in form. Mr. Hardy performed the sick man like an angel. He sat up in bed, and talked so pathetically, that the tears stood in Doricourt's eyes.

Flut. Ay, stood—they did not drop, but stood. I shall in future be very exact: the parson seized the moment; you know they never miss an opportunity.

Mrs. R. Make haste, said Doricourt; if I have time to reflect, poor Hardy will die unhappy.

Flut. They were got as far as the day of judgment, when we slipped out of the room.

Sir G. Then, by this time, they must have reached amazement, which, every body knows, is the end of matrimony.

Mrs. R. Ay, the reverend fathers ended the service with that word, prophetically—to teach the bride what a capricious monster a husband is.

Sir G. I rather think it was sarcastically—to prepare the bridegroom for the unreasonable humours and vagaries of his helpmate.

Lady F. Here comes the bridegroom of to-night.

Enter DORICOURT *and* VILLERS.—VILLERS *whispers* SAVILLE, *who goes out.*

Omnes. Joy! joy! joy!

Miss O. If he's a sample of bridegrooms, keep me single! A younger brother, from the funeral of his father, could not carry a more fretful countenance.

Flut. Oh! Now he's melancholy mad, I suppose.

Lady F. You do not consider the importance of the occasion.

Vill. No; nor how shocking a thing it is for a man to be forced to marry one woman whilst his heart is devoted to another.

Mrs. R. Well, now 'tis over, I confess to you, Mr. Doricourt, I think 'twas a most ridiculous piece of Quixotism, to give up the happiness of a whole life to a man who perhaps has but a few moments to be sensible of the sacrifice.

Flut. So it appeared to me. But, thought I, Mr. Doricourt has travelled—he knows best.

Doric. Zounds! Confusion! Did ye not all set upon me? Didn't ye talk to me of honour—Compassion—Justice?

Sir G. Very true—You have acted according to

their dictates, and I hope the utmost felicity of the married state will reward you.

Doric. Never, Sir George! To felicity I bid adieu —but I will endeavour to be content. Where is my --I must speak it—where is my wife?

Enter LETITIA, *masked, led by* SAVILLE.

Sav. Mr. Doricourt, this lady was pressing to be introduced to you.

Doric. Oh! [*Starting.*

Letit. I told you last night you should see me at a time when you least expected me—and I have kept my promise.

Vill. Whoever you are, madam, you could not have arrived at a happier moment. Mr. Doricourt is just married.

Letit. Married! Impossible! 'Tis but a few hours since he swore to me eternal love: I believed him, gave him up my virgin heart—and now!——Ungrateful sex!

Doric. Your virgin heart! No lady——my fate, thank Heaven! yet wants that torture. Nothing but the conviction that you was another's, could have made me think one moment of marriage, to have saved the lives of half mankind. But this visit, madam, is as barbarous as unexpected. It is now my duty to forget you, which, spite of your situation, I found difficult enough.

Letit. My situation! What situation?

Doric. I must apologise for explaining it in this company—but, madam, I am not ignorant that you are the companion of Lord George Jennet—and this is the only circumstance that can give me peace.

Letit. I—a companion! Ridiculous pretence! No, sir, know, to your confusion, that my heart, my honour, my name, is unspotted as hers you have married; my birth equal to your own, my fortune large.

That, and my person, might have been yours. But, sir, farewell! [*Going.*

Doric. Oh, stay a moment—Rascal! is she not—

Flut. Who, she? O lord! no—'Twas quite a different person that I meant. I never saw that lady before.

Doric. Then, never shalt thou see her more.
[*Shakes* FLUTTER.

Mrs. R. Have mercy upon the poor man! Heavens! He'll murder him.

Doric. Murder him! Yes, you, myself, and all mankind. Sir George—Saville—Villers—'twas you who pushed me on this precipice; 'tis you who have snatched from me joy, felicity, and life.

Mrs. R. There! Now, how well he acts the madman! This is something like! I knew he would do it well enough, when the time came.

Doric. Hard-hearted woman! enjoy my ruin—riot in my wretchedness. [HARDY *bursts in.*

Hardy. This is too much. You are now the husband of my daughter; and how dare you show all this passion about another woman?

Doric. Alive again!

Hardy. Alive! ay, and merry. Here, wipe off the flour from my face. I was never in better health and spirits in my life. I foresaw 'twould do. Why, my illness was only a fetch, man! to make you marry Letty.

Doric. It was! Base and ungenerous! Well, sir, you shall be gratified. The possession of my heart was no object either with you or your daughter. My fortune and name was all you desired, and these—I leave ye. My native England I shall quit, nor ever behold you more. But, lady, that, in my exile, I may have one consolation, grant me the favour you denied last night;—let me behold all that mask conceals, that your whole image may be impressed on my heart, and cheer my distant solitary hours.

Letit. This is the most awful moment of my life. Oh, Doricourt, the slight action of taking off my mask stamps me the most blest or miserable of women!

Doric. What can this mean? Reveal your face, I conjure you.

Letit. Behold it.

Doric. Rapture! Transport! Heaven!

Flut. Now for a touch of the happy madman.

Letit. This little stratagem arose from my disappointment in not having made the impression on you I wished. The timidity of the English character threw a veil over me you could not penetrate. You have forced me to emerge in some measure from my natural reserve, and to throw off the veil that hid me.

Doric. I am yet in a state of intoxication—I cannot answer you.—Speak on, sweet angel!

Letit. You see I *can* be any thing; chuse then my character—your taste shall fix it. Shall I be an English wife?—or, breaking from the bonds of nature and education, step forth to the world in all the captivating glare of foreign manners?

Doric. You shall be nothing but yourself—nothing can be captivating that you are not. I will not wrong your penetration, by pretending that you won my heart at the first interview; but you have now my whole soul—your person, your face, your mind, I would not exchange for those of any other woman breathing.

Hardy. A dog! how well he makes up for past slights! Cousin Rackett, I wish you a good husband, with all my heart. Mr. Flutter, I'll believe every word you say this fortnight. Mr. Villers, you and I have managed this to a T. I never was so merry in my life—'Gad, I believe I can dance. [*Footing.*] Come into the next room; I have ordered out every drop of my forty-eight, and I'll invite the whole parish of St. George's, but what we'll drink it out—except one dozen, which I shall keep under three double locks,

for a certain christening, that I foresee will happen within this twelvemonth.

Doric. Charming, charming creature!

Letit. Congratulate me, my dear friends! Can you conceive my happiness?

Hardy. No, congratulate me; for mine is the greatest.

Flut. No, congratulate me, that I have escaped with life, and give me some sticking plaister—this wild cat has torn the skin from my throat.

Sir G. I expect to be among the first who are congratulated—for I have recovered one angel, while Doricourt has gained another.

Hardy. Pho! pho! Don't talk of angels, we shall be happier by half as mortals.

Doric. My charming bride! It was a strange perversion of taste, that led me to consider the delicate timidity of your deportment as the mark of an uninformed mind, or inelegant manners. I feel now it is to that innate modesty, *English* husbands owe a felicity the married men of other nations are strangers to; it is a sacred veil to your own charms; it is the surest bulwark to your husband's honour; and cursed be the hour—should it ever arrive—in which *British* ladies shall sacrifice to *foreign graces* the grace of modesty!

THE END.

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